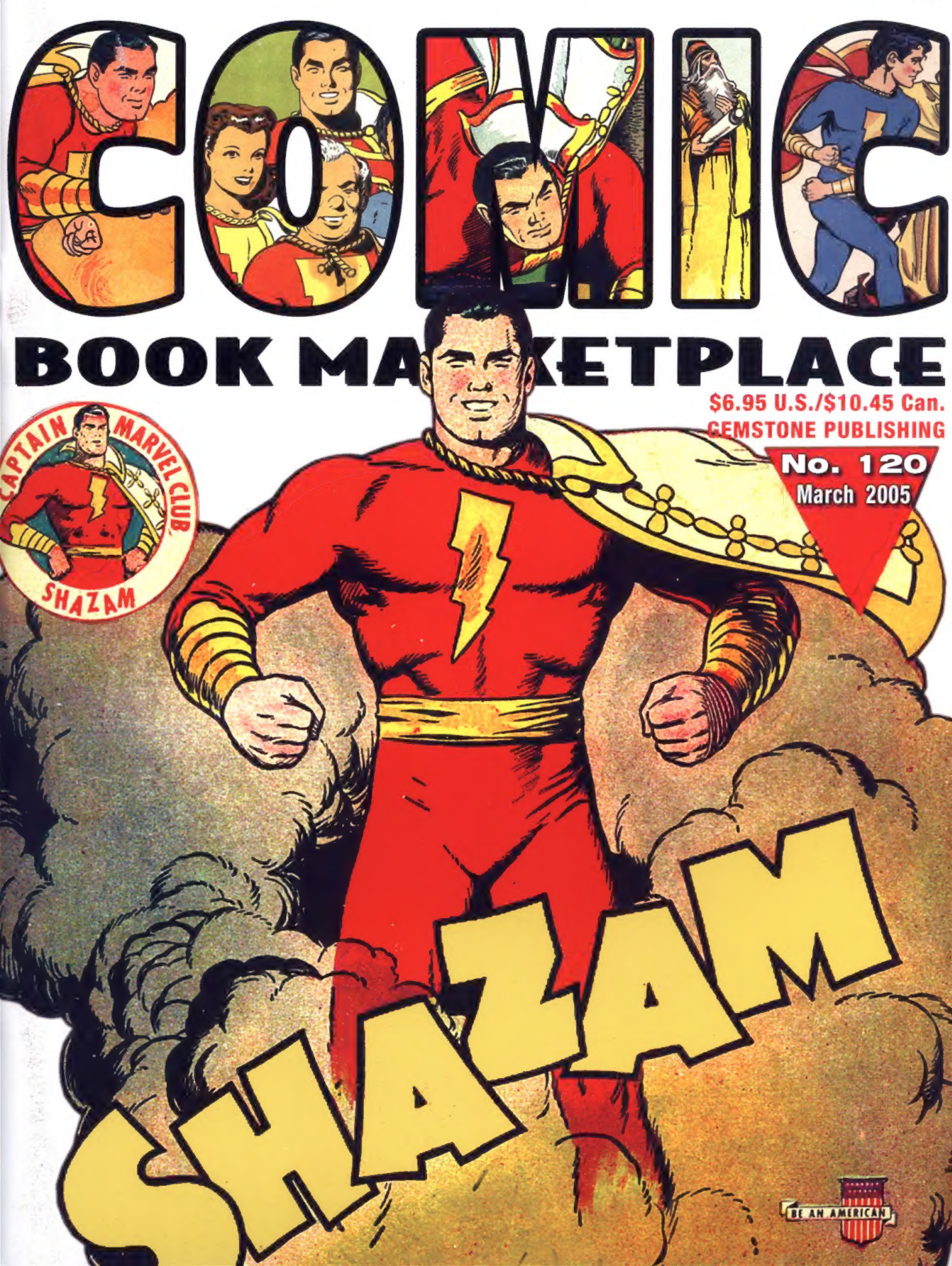
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No. 120
March 2005
CAPTAIN MARVEL CLUB
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COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE

A GEMSTONE PUBLICATION

Vol. 3 No. 120

March 2005

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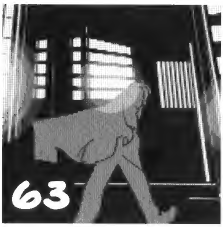

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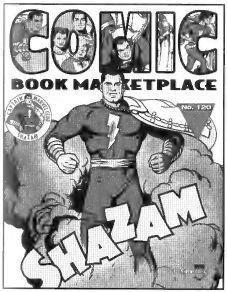

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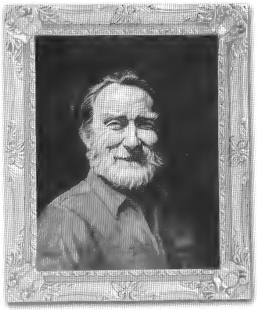

The End is Near!

This will be the next-to-last issue of *Comic Book Marketplace*.

It's a numbers game being played in a new world of free and instant access to the world through the Internet. In the long, ten-year history of *CBM*, both Gary Carter and I tried to put out a magazine for serious comic collectors, and some of those issues were pretty darn good, but still our sales never rose above a few thousand copies per issue and there was never an issue that made a profit. Still, we were happy to do the magazine for the good of the comics hobby.

During the last year or so, Gemstone has launched a new weekly online e-newsletter, *Scoop*, which has served basically the same function as *CBM*...to educate and entertain comics fans about new developments and important historical data. And in that short time, *Scoop* is now getting over 1.2 million unique visitors every month! The collectors who receive *Scoop* are getting their industry news weeks faster than would ever be possible in a printed magazine format, and the cost to them is zero.

And so, as time rolls on, the Willy Lomans of the world who are still selling buggy whips in an automotive age are trying to adapt to the changing technology. In my opinion, this trend will continue to hurt the magazine business, but not the book business. A magazine is usually considered a throwaway, to be read and enjoyed and discarded, whereas a book is something we want to keep and refer to over and over.

So as Gemstone's magazine *CBM* fades into history, leaving behind 121 issues—around 10,000 pages—for posterity, it opens the door for a new "*CBM*" as an Internet magazine. Stay tuned to *Scoop* for further information.

And I want to personally say that I have enjoyed being associated with the last 37 issues of *CBM* and working with our contributors. I'll miss them all, but you won't...they will be turning up in the "new *CBM*" on the Internet with the same type articles and information you are used to getting.

The next issue of *CBM*, #121, will be the last in this format. I will devote the letters column to your reactions to this announcement and your memories of *CBM*.

Russ Cochran
Editor & Publisher

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STEPHEN A. GEPPI
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East Coast Editor

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Art Director and Cover Designer

MICHELLE NOLAN, WILL MURRAY
BILL BAKER, PAT CALHOUN
JON BERK, PAUL GRAVETT
R.C. HARVEY, DAN JOHNSON
STEVE KRONENBERG, MARK SQUIREK
S.C. RINGGENBERG, BHOB STEWART
JOHN STUART JR, MIKE WILBUR
Contributors

PRICING & MARKET REPORTS
ROBERT M. OVERSTREET
Senior Pricing Editor

MICHAEL NAIMAN
Market Reports Editor
mnaiman1@cox.net

MARK HUESMAN
Pricing Coordinator
feedback@gemstonepub.com

ADVERTISING
ANGELA MEYER
Traffic & Operations Manager
ec@gemstonepub.com
Toll Free (800) 322-7978

BRENDA BUSICK
Creative Director
bbrenda@gemstonepub.com

RESEARCH
JOE McGUCKIN
mjoe@diamondgalleries.com

CUSTOMER SERVICE & ADMINISTRATION
JUDY GOODWIN
Customer Service Manager
cbm@gemstonepub.com
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The next issue of *Comic Book Marketplace* will be our final issue. If you would like to comment on *CBM*, we will run your letter here. Please submit by April 1.

Our associate

The last two issues on the Jewish roots of the comics have been phenomenal, kudos to everyone involved. If *CBM* doesn't win an Eisner award for these issues, then there's something very wrong.

I'm very proud to be associated with such an inspiring magazine.

John Stuart
via e-mail

A Stanzine

I was delighted to see from Pete von Sholly's letter that John Stanley's Eisner Award was accepted on behalf of the Stanley family. That this was among the final group of Eisner Awards to be given during Will Eisner's lifetime gives it added poignancy.

I'm publishing a fanzine with material about Little Lulu and the comic book work of John Stanley. I'd be happy to mail spec copies to Pete and/or anyone else interested—simply let me know: edbuchman@hotmail.com. Best,

Ed Buchman
via e-mail

Knowledge is power

Just read about pressing in *CBM*. I don't think it is pertinent if pressing is restoration or not. Though I personally feel it is. Anything that has been done to a book should have to be disclosed, CGC or anyone else can call it what they want. If I am buying a book I want to decide if the pressing of it matters. I just want to be informed.

Rob Weinberg
via e-mail

I recently read your article on 'pressing' in *Comic Book Market Place* #117 as well as Marnin Rosenberg's comments on his website (**ComicCollectors.net**). I believe that the real question here is the disclosure of pressing on the label. If comic book owners want to press their books they can do whatever they want, I just want to know about it! Working in the investment business I am used to dealing with conflicts of interest. Prior to my present position I worked as a stockbroker. There is clear conflict of interest in selling stocks on a commission basis (I may suggest trades that do not benefit the client, but generate commissions for myself). How is this dealt with? The clients are made aware that the broker works on commission at the beginning of the relationship. I now work with institutional investors rather than retail investors, but the situation is the same. Again, we deal with the conflict by making the clients aware of it at the outset of our relationship. For this reason, I don't mind if CGC wants to start pressing comic books, but I think they must come clean and put it on the label.

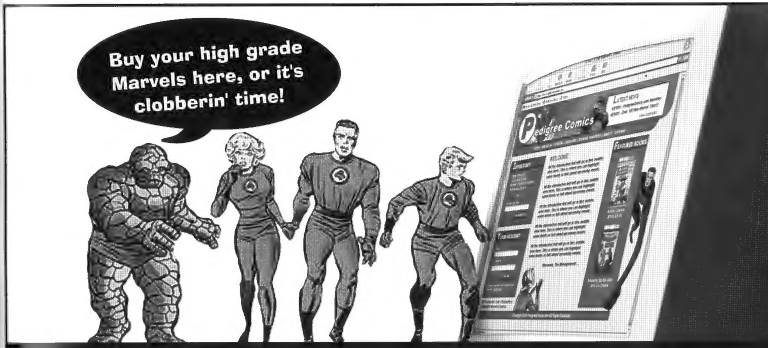
I understand that there is a lot of money to be made increasing the grade of comic books by pressing them, but CGC also has a lot to lose. I am already reconsidering purchases of CGCed books because I am now aware that I don't actually know what I am getting. I believe that it would be a long-term bad business decision for CGC to go ahead with undisclosed pressing. My firm could make more money today by not disclosing our conflicts and making recommendations that benefit us rather than the client, but eventually people would find out and we would lose all our clients. CGC is already running what must be a very lucrative business; I don't understand why they would put this at risk to make a few extra bucks. That being said, all the executives at Enron were doing pretty well when they decided to pull their little scam. The bad decision-making that results from greed is incredible.

Mike McMurray
Canada

An ask from the past

Hi! I was re-reading issue #73 (Nov 1999, Warren comics) and decided to ask a question...concerning an old horror comic.

[continued on page 77]



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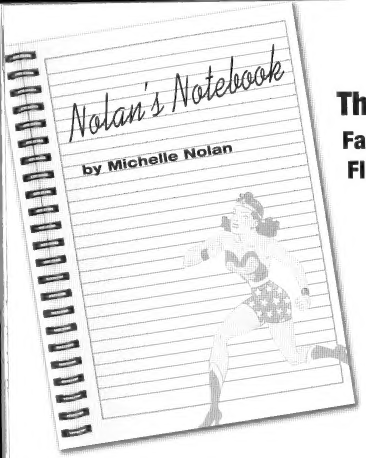


The Mystery of "Love Mystery"

Fawcett's Odd Three-Issue Fling with Intrigue

Perhaps Fawcett's little-known *Love Mystery* does not quite match up to Charlton's *Space Western Comics* when it comes to bizarre genre pairings. Nonetheless, the three-issue run of romance and intrigue from the fine folks who brought us Captain Marvel was an original concept in comic books.

Not only that, I'll bet more people have seen an issue of *Space Western*—which ran six issues (#40-45) in 1952-53—than have ever perused a copy of *Love Mystery*.

While rummaging through a dealer's box of miscellaneous old comics a couple of years ago at ComicCon International: San Diego, I let out a muffled cry of delight: There, in all its glory, was a copy of *Love Mystery* #1—and affordable at the low-grade *Guide* value of $21, to boot!

I let out a muted "Eureka!" and forked over the cash without even arguing the price—which will tell anyone who knows how cheap I am what a find this was! This, indeed, was one of those wonderful moments that every collector cherishes at the end of a seemingly endless quest.

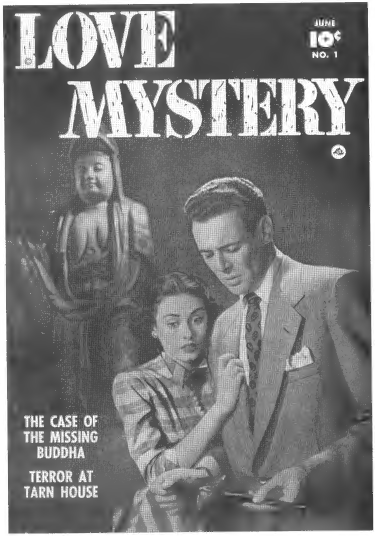
I would not say *Love Mystery* #2 (Aug 1950) and #3 (Oct 1950) are common, but I had seen at least a few copies of each and I had long since salted away copies. But #1 (Jun 1950) eluded me for a good 20 years! I couldn't remember ever having seen one outside the pages of the Gerber *Photo-Journal*—along with the odd house ad for #1 on the inside back cover of #2!—although I may have left on someone's wall exhibit one of those ever-frustrating $100 to $200 copies in pretty condition.

At any rate, here I was, the unabashedly proud owner of a copy of *Love Mystery* #1. I showed it to a few cognoscenti in the crowd who love to ogle scarce comics. I basked in congratulations. My find not only completed my *Love Mystery* run, but also enhanced my collection of the estimable works of George Evans, one of the most underrated of all Golden Age/Atom Age/Silver Age artists.

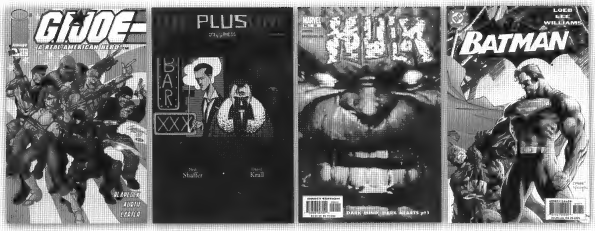
It's really not that much of a mystery, though, why readers apparently did not love this intriguing little title. The evidence is too conclusive.

Love Mystery seems to have been targeted to older readers, but Fawcett could not have published this experiment at a worse time—during the height of the "Love Glut" of 1950.

With about 150 different love titles from two dozen distinct



Love Mystery #1 (Jun 1950).



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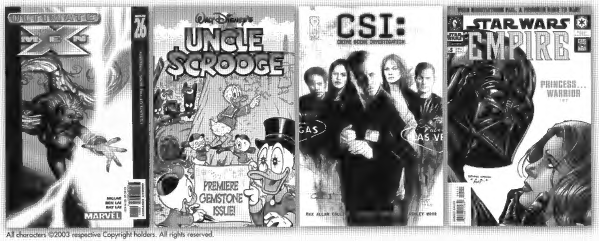

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companies hitting the newsstands at one point or another during the first half of 1950—well over 60 issues per month in a six-month span!—a shakeout was inevitable.

Every company with more than two romance titles cut back on love comics in the second half of 1950. Fawcett, in fact, suffered much more than most after being one of the first companies to jump on the four-color hay wagon following Simon & Kirby's historic *Young Romance* #1 (Sep/Oct 1947).

One year later, Fawcett made one of those archetypical shifts that so enchanted Dr. Fredric Wertham, converting Golden Age mainstay *Captain Midnight* into *Sweethearts* (with #68, Oct 1948). Fawcett, in fact, was so enamored of love for sale that the company took the unprecedented step of issuing *Sweethearts* on a monthly basis right from the start.

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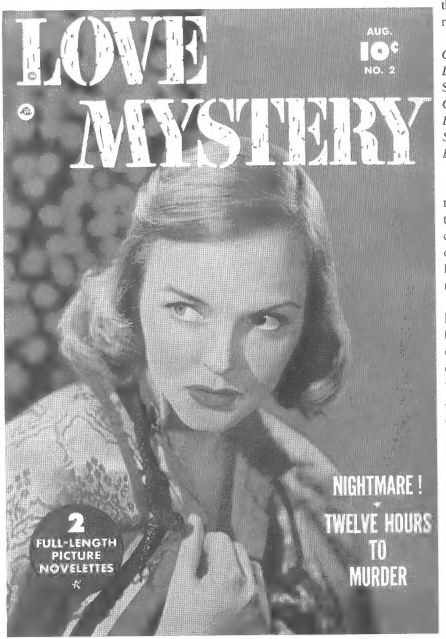
Sweethearts must have been a huge success, because Fawcett took one of its old oversize confession magazine titles, *Life Story*, and also made it a monthly comic book beginning with #1 (Apr 1949). And in little more than a year—Holy Moley!—there followed an astounding 15 more Fawcett romance titles.



Love Mystery #2 (Aug 1950).

Every one of them used photo covers—*Cowboy Love*, *Romantic Secrets*, *Romantic Story*, *Love Memories*, *Exciting Romances* (how did the Standard/Pines folks allow that?), *True Confidences*, *Romantic Western*, *Sweetheart Diary*, *True Stories of Romance*, *True Sweetheart Secrets*, *Girls in Love*, *Negro Romances* (!), *I Love You*, *Young Marriage*—and *Love Mystery*.

A Love Glut, to be sure!

The last four titles to be introduced were the three-issue run of *Negro Romances*, the one-shot titles *I Love You* and *Young Marriage*—and, of course, *Love Mystery*. In fact, in the same month of the date of *Love Mystery* #1—June 1950—Fawcett placed a dozen love comics on the newsstands!

It was all quite unsustainable, of course. Fawcett was forced to dump nine romance titles between June and October 1950 and to delay four others, which staggered on a few times a year into early 1953. Not that the company didn't score big with love, though. *Sweethearts*, *Life Story* and *Romantic Secrets* all ran monthly in 1950-52 and *Romantic Story* ran bi-monthly.

Love Mystery, however, was not one of the lucky ones, and it deserved so much better.

After all, all too many of Fawcett's love stories, nicely illustrated though they were, involved themes like "I Was Selfish" or "I Was Blinded by Money." In contrast, the six little epics in the three issues of *Love Mystery* were different. Not always well written, but at least different.

There was "The Case of the Missing Buddha" and "Terror at Tarn House" in #1, "Nightmare" and "Twelve Hours to Murder" in #2, and "Fatal Fascination" and "Death Take All" in #3. These were 36-page comics (including covers), unlike the fat 52-page Fawcetts more typical of the year

1950, but each had 30 pages of comics, plus the U.S. Post Office-mandated two-page text feature. The only advertising was on the covers, and even that was all house ads except for the "Seventeen Cosmetics" ad on the inside front cover of #2.

Love Mystery seems to have been marketed to older teenagers and adult women, since the stories were far wordier and much more densely (if not always logically) plotted than the vast majority of love comics, which tended to be read primarily by females 10 and older. All three back covers plugged *True Confessions*, Fawcett's long-running text magazine, although most other Fawcett romance comics carried similar ads for *True Confessions*.

There was an amazingly sensationalized back cover ad for *True Confessions* on the back of *Love Mystery* #2. Bannered over a dropout photo of a teenage girl clinging to a boy at the wheel was the term "Teenicide!" in two-inch letters. The blurb began, "This girl and her boy friend discovered what happens when teenagers, carried away by wildfire romance, defy the law and their parents. Her tragic story appeared in *True Confessions*..."

Then the ad ended with this equally dumbfounding, dignified observation: "Stories to help you make a better life for yourself and those you love...There is no finer, more

Love **Mystery** #2 "Twelve Hours to Murder" art by George Evans.

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To be sure! Talk about trying to have it both ways!

In the early years of romance comics, two other companies incorporated mystery and exotic settings heavily into their regular love titles—Quality Comics and ACG. But no other company ever tried even the briefest flirtation with anything as off-brand or exotic as *Love Mystery*. Except, of course, for Fawcett's bizarre *Negro Romances*, which also ran only three issues on the same dates as *Love Mystery*.

There were dozens of western romance, movie love, and military romance type titles, of course, but these were well within the bounds of the traditional genre.

The Gerber *Photo-Journal* gives *Love Mystery* #1 a 5 but I can't agree. I'd say it's at least a 6 and quite likely a 7, meaning 20 to 50 copies exist. Those big *Photo-Journal* books that everyone loves award both #2 and #3 a grade of 4, and that's closer—they probably are no scarcer than a 5.

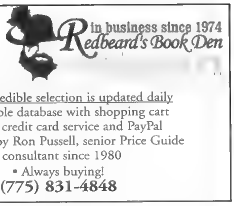
The most unusual stories are "The Case of the Missing Buddha" in #1 and the unusual "Death Take All" in #3.

"Buddha" involved the attempts of a secretary (strikingly beautiful, of course) and a private detective (a classic hunk, natch) to solve the mystery of the murder of her boss. The

culprit was a double-dealing female office manager who learned that the rival of the boss had been hiding diamonds in a Buddha statue.

The secretary and detective wind up tied up in adjoining panels on the bottom of the penultimate page. As the detective finds a way to free himself, the secretary wonders, "If only he loved me...perhaps I could better face the prospect of death!" When she sees him escape, she fears he has deserted her, only to see him come back with police in tow. Her response: "Oh, Neil, my dearest! Untie my arms so I can put them around you!"

We didn't say this was good literature, mind you, just funky fun!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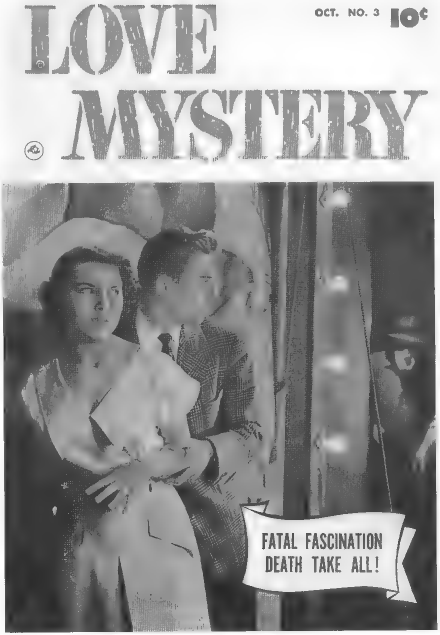
Bob Powell, who was so good on sports strips in Street & Smith's long-running 1940's title *True Sport Picture Stories*, did a rousing 15-page horse racing mystery for #3, "Death Take All." This is by far the most amusing story in *Love Mystery*.



There were more than a few romance comic stories involving baseball and football, and lots involving horses, cowboys and dude ranches, but for some reason not too many involved horse racing. "Death Take All" takes us behind the scenes with a reporter (handsome, of course) and his investigation into a crooked trainer who tires to defraud a good guy horse owner and his daughter (beautiful, of course).

Some of the lines in this tale are priceless. Early on, when our reporter is trying to get the girl out of the way of a rearing horse, he inadvertently trips her and says, "There goes my dignity! Just as I was trying to play hero??" (Right, two question marks.) To which she responds, "I prefer slightly vulnerable heroes anyway!! (Right, two exclamation points.)

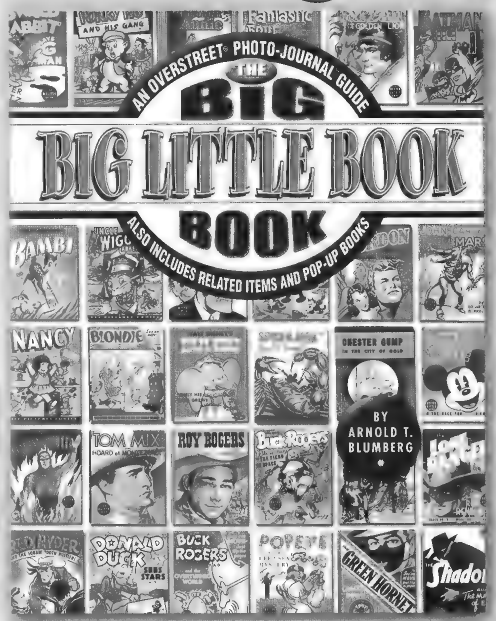
Later, when the baddies try to frame our hero, he tells a cop who has arrived on the scene, "I'm a newspaper reporter, officer. I just got a flash there was a story out here!!" The line works, enabling our hero to buy the time he needs to solve the crime, unleash the correct horse in time to win the big stakes race, and get the girl.

Fawcett had only a five-year fling with romance comics, since the company got out of the love business even before the firm stopped publishing *Captain Marvel* and westerns. Fawcett's final romance comic was *Romantic Story* #22 (Jun 1953).

Many folks, though, don't realize that up to that date, no comic book company had produced more romance comics than Fawcett—235 in all. And it was no mystery why three of them were just a little unlike any others published during those halcyon early days of clinches and kisses in the funnybooks.

Love Mystery #3 (Oct 1950).

The Little Books with Big Appeal!



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by Pat Calhoun

The Waning of Whiz, the Fading of Fawcett, and Dr. Death

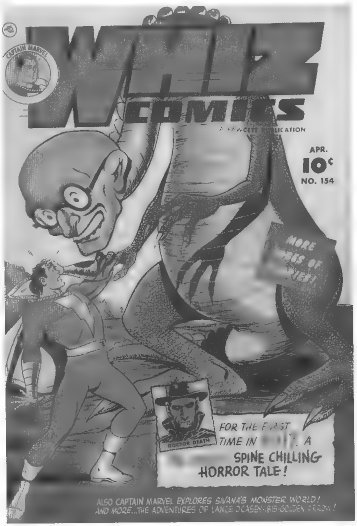
One of the major changes that the early and mid 1950s brought to comic books was the demise of the multi-genre "anthology" title in its pure form, a catholic catch-all that combined super-heroes with teen humor, sports with science fiction, crime with adventure, romance, western, and war—if it was comics it qualified. So the explosion of genres in the postwar marketplace was more of a repackaging than groundbreaking. The transition from a universal audience to fragmented niche marketing had begun. These changes were hastened by the drop in page counts from 52 to 36, a move the industry made to retain profits without raising prices. It was no longer possible to feature many genres under one cover. Of course each of the major anthology titles had their own flavor, and watching the final phases of any one of them yields insights into comics history. So, here we will examine the end of Fawcett's *Whiz Comics*, the original home of their supremely-successful super-hero Captain Marvel, and how the inclusion in the last two issues of horror-host Dr. Death was truly the kiss of death.

By 1953 the horror/SF/fantasy genre had gained dominance over the newsstands, prompting publishers of anthology titles to promote a horror/fantasy strip from the-back-of-the-book to cover feature, install a new strip, or borrow characters from other titles to add some grim spice to the mix. Since *Whiz* was a hero anthology, and none of the characters really worked with horror (although the magician Ibis the Invincible fit the genre, as will be seen) they brought in the host of their popular horror title, *This Magazine Is Haunted*. Maybe the thought was that Dr. Death's image on the cover would be the surest way to attract horror fans.

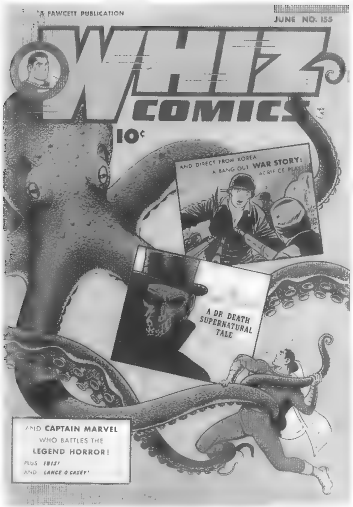
Whiz #154 (Apr 1953) sports a Captain Marvel cover that's more than a tad monstrous. The great thing about the late Cap stories was that while they reduced the page count they seemed to keep the same number of incidents per story—so the latter entries move quickly. The frantic pace helps disguise the fact that the story's somewhat superficial, but the narrative rush and the Kurt Schaffenberger art make it a worthwhile if not wonderful seven pages.

Lance O'Casey has always struck this author as a second-rate second banana. No powers, no costume, very little shtick—he's a sailor of some sort, one of those old-fashioned two-fisted adventurer types. Lance did have pluck enough to keep his lack of distinction from cutting short a career stretching all the way back to *Whiz* #2 May 1940 (which was the first issue as #1 was ashcan only).

Ibis the Invincible—another vet from *Whiz* #2 on—is a more interesting character, but still a mixed bag. On the plus side: he has magic powers, a costume (turban and magic wand), an occult ambience that invited an infusion of horror elements, and—most importantly—a beautiful raven-haired red-dressed Egyptian princess (Taia) as his partner. On the debit side of the ledger it must be said that there's a



Whiz #154 (Apr 1953) It's the last chance for Captain Marvel and Sivana to harass each other in **Whiz**. The blurb box reading "more pages of stories" ballyhoos the fact that inside are 32 cover-to-cover pages of comics with no ads.



Whiz #155 (Jun 1953) The sea monster's strength catches Cap off-guard, but the Kraken itself appears nonchalant as it tries to promote itself a snack of red cheese. The Grand Comics Database credits this cover to the original Captain Marvel artist, C. C. Beck.

philosophical weakness in omnipotent characters (who could just wish the evildoers away) and a concomitant lack of suspense in stories where a magic wand saves the day. Still, this month's offering is great fun as Ibis battles a marauding sea-monster in a story with charmingly crude art and a clever climax.

The Dr. Death ("for the first time in *Whiz*") story is OK, but the stories in *This Magazine Is Haunted* often ran seven to ten pages rather than the five here, and it was that room for elaboration that made Fawcett horror so enjoyable. Nonetheless it serves as a horror intro, and an advertisement for *This Mag Is Haunted*.

The fourth survivor who'd been around since the title started was that archer of the Old West, Golden Arrow. Although the stories weren't necessarily great shakes and the strip isn't remembered for superlative art, the concept of the character itself had such rightness and lent such a nice balance to the *Whiz* lineup that GA was an asset to the title throughout the 14-year run. That being said, Golden Arrow is the only one of the original quartet (with Cap, Lance, and Ibis) who would not make it into #155.

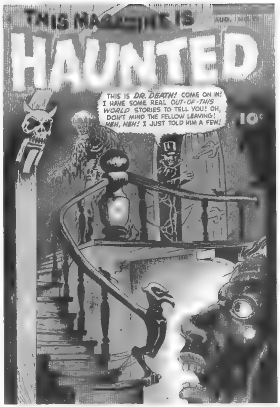
Elbowing out Golden Arrow to squeeze in a "direct from Korea" war story was a curious choice, but it pitched *Whiz* as an interesting anthology variant—part hero and part genre. Too bad this was the final issue. The cover for *Whiz* #155 (Jun 1953) works pretty well with Dr. Death and "Korea" inset into Cap's battle with the Kraken. The Captain Marvel story is somewhat gruesome, as the Kraken has teamed with a group of vampire bats to help him (her?) procure human prey. This month's tale told by Dr. Death is a to the (sharp!) point weirdie that fits the five-page format.

After six pages of Lance O'Casey derring-do, the man of miracles is back as Ibis takes on some ghosts from his homeland of ancient Egypt. It's formula stuff but colorful and fast-paced. The war story makes its point about courage in combat but never addresses the justice of the conflict itself. It's hard to say whether the tinkering with *Whiz* was a real attempt to prolong the title, but easy to say that the first half of 1953 wreaked havoc on long-running anthology titles with Hillman's wonderful *Airboy* expiring in March and Fiction House's glorious *Jumbo* exiting in May.

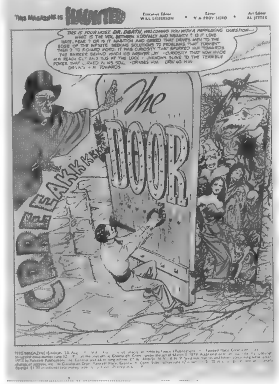
Anyone who scoured the stands in vain for *Whiz* #156 and then bought *This Magazine Is Haunted* #12 (Aug 1953)—after having bonded with Dr D. in #154 and #155 perhaps—ended up with an excellent horror comic. "The Door" is brilliantly conceived, elegantly executed, and superbly drawn. On top of that it's a meaty (11-page) origin of Dr. Death! If you're a Dr. Death fan (thanks be to his creator the legendary Sheldon "Shelly" Moldoff) you need this book, and if you

IBIS--DO SOMETHING! THE MONSTER HAS TAKEN SOMEONE FROM THAT BUILDING--IT ITS GOING TO FEED ON HIM!
IBISTICK! FORCE THE MONSTER TO RELEASE ITS PRISONER! LET A GIANT NET ENVELOP IT!
IS THE IBISTICK FOR US
OHHH! THE NET CAN'T HOLD IT!
NO FORTUNE WEIRDO, CAN DESTROY THIS!

"The Man-Eater From the Deep" Ibis, Taia, the Ibistick, and a mean green sea-monster all see action in these three panels from page four. If he'd waved his wand and made the DC lawsuit go away **Whiz** might still rule the racks.


THIS MAGAZINE IS
HAUNTED
THIS IS DR. DEATH! COME ON IN! I HAVE SOME REAL OUT-OF-THIS-WORLD STORIES TO TELL YOU! OH, DON'T MIND THE FELLOW LEANING! UHH, HERE'S JUST TOLD HIM A FEW!
10¢

This Magazine Is Haunted #12 (Aug 1953). Fawcett never billed itself as publisher on the covers of its horror comics. But such modesty seems excessive given that their books were good fun and seldom gross.

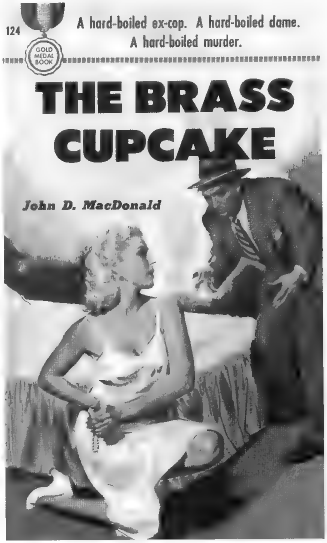


"The Door" If you're lucky, for every multitude of stories that go by promising more than they deliver—one shows up delivering more than it promised: here it is. And a special tip of the top hat goes to Shelly Moldoff for having created the consummate horror host.

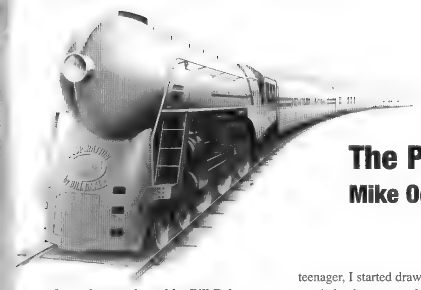
aren't: go buy a copy of *Whiz* #156.

The two middle stories are intriguing and well-drawn, but the finale, "The Wall of Flesh," is something special. Take a mad scientist, add a young man and woman, then throw in a hungry wall of flesh and have Bob Powell illustrate it in his fast-moving style—you end up with an outstanding 8-pager. *This Mag Is Haunted* was bought from Fawcett by Charlton and continued without missing a beat with #14 (Dec 1953) and #15 (Feb 1954) being the transition issues and Dr. Death covers soon to fall into the capable hands of Steve Ditko. In later 1954 Charlton feared the wrath of the Comics Code and changed the title to *Danger and Adventure* for issues #22 through #27—all the 1955 issues. They even brought back Lance O'Casey and Ibis the Invincible. When the fever cooled Charlton resurrected the title for five fantasy issues in 1957 and 1958.

An underestimated factor in Fawcett's decision to stop publishing comics is the enormous success of their Gold Medal paperback line. Fawcett began the series in 1950, featuring original novels rather than reprints and bumping the price (a dime) up to 35¢. The books sold briskly giving Fawcett a new cash cow, which made them look at the dimming prospects of the comic book market (though sales were still stratospheric there was clearly trouble ahead), and the added expense of the ongoing lawsuit from DC Comics (claiming Captain Marvel infringed their copyright on Superman). Although the choice they made wounded Captain Marvel fans then and forever, from a business standpoint it made perfect sense.



"The Brass Cupcake" **Gold Medal** #124 1950 This early effort (numbering began with #99), the first printing of John D. MacDonald's first book, features a classic cover by Barye Phillips. John D.'s decades-long run of best-sellers helped win **Gold Medal** the gold medal.



The Power of Simplicity

Mike Oeming on his influences

Interview conducted by Bill Baker

Michael Avon Oeming isn't just one ferociously talented guy, he's also insanely busy. When he's not drawing the next issue of Powers, *the hugely popular, inventive and irreverent monthly series which liberally mixes police procedurals and super heroics, he's drawing the latest installment of* Hammer of the Gods *from Insight Studio mate Mark Wheatley's script, or adding a few last minute spot illustrations to a new novel inspired by Cervantes'* Don Quixote. *Then again, a casual observer might be just as likely to discover Oeming working on the script for a forthcoming chapter of the* Stormbreaker: The Saga of Beta Ray Bill *miniseries he's currently doing with Marvel, or perhaps outlining or thumbnailing, depending on his creative role, yet another miniseries or one shot, like the recently-released* Six, *or the forthcoming* 86 Voltz the Dead Girl.

Still, no matter what the project or activity, there's one thing you can always expect from Oeming: elegant, easily read layouts featuring dynamic and supple figures displaying true emotions, which are surely, but subtly and invisibly supported by crystal clear and silky smooth storytelling. Or a script that challenges as it entertains.

And what's truly amazing is, he makes it all look so simple.

Comic Book Marketplace: I understand that you fell under the direct influence of a comics pro quite early in your life. True?

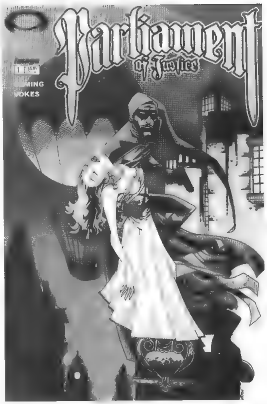
Mike Oeming: [When] I was a teenager, I started drawing, and I found a comic book store nearby. Then I met Adam Hughes, who was living in the town right over next to me. And we became friends, and Adam was one of my earliest mentors. He introduced me to Neil Vokes. Neil introduced me to the work of a lot of my favorite artists, like Mike Mignola, Alex Toth and Jack Kirby, and I learned a lot of storytelling from those people as well as from watching Adam work and grow. So that's pretty much how it started out.

The artist's original cover image for the Bristol Comic Expo 2005's program, where Oeming will be appearing over the weekend of May 13-15th. Go to **www.comicexpo.net** for more information.

CBM: What were some of the things you learned from Adam?

Oeming: A lot. I think mostly about storytelling. I really should have been just trying to rip him off and draw like him; I would have gotten work sooner if I had been one of those Adam clones. [General laughter] But luckily I had some sort of sense of self, and I found other people to rip off. [More laughter] But really, from Adam, it was talking about storytelling. And I remember specifically when he was working on the *Star Trek* graphic novel, and there's a scene of a bunch of guys getting out of a transport ship of some kind, like army guys, running. And he specifically pointed out to me how he had drawn each of them in an animation phase. The first guy was stepping out, the second guy was in a squatting, landing position, the third guy was running with his left foot out first, the next guy had his right foot out first, so it was like an animated scene. And we would talk about guys like Steve Rude, and why they were great. And it was really like a school in itself, talking about why we liked other artists and stuff, and Adam showing me what he was doing.

And one of the things I learned most from Adam was the thought process, which, for Adam, is—maybe it's changed, because we haven't worked together in a long time in the same studio—but at the time, when I was with him, he would take the longest on working on a page looking at it. He would just stare at the page. It would be



The excellent stand-alone graphic novel **Parliament** features Oeming's take on the grim 'n' gritty superhero genre and gorgeous Neil Vokes art.

like freakin' blank, with like a couple lines, after an hour. He would just really, really think about the page and what he was doing before he started it. And that became a big thing for me, eventually, learning to really think about it. Even to this day, the thing that takes the longest for me is the breakdown stage, the layouts, and getting that right. Then the actual drawing, I just kind of fart it out, and there it is.

CBM: How about Brian Bendis? Has working with him had any real effect on your work?

Oeming: There's really only two works of mine that you can look at before *Powers* that show my kind of progression: one was *Ship of Fools*, which is almost completely lacking and devoid of design. It's all just panel to panel stuff. In fact, it's just way too crowded, and it's very hard to follow, and it's just panel to panel work. It was before my style changed, where my work became iconic and easier to look at, so I was trying to do a lot of line work and stuff. So it was just a lot harder to look at.

Then, after that, my very next work was *Bulletproof Monk*. And *Bulletproof Monk* was the first time I really paid attention to the design. I'd bought a bunch of design books, and I had become friends with David Mack over the years, and I really liked the way he would use design, and put his sense of design into the pages. So I took a combination of that, and I had just met Brian Bendis at the beginning of *Ship of Fools*, and we became friends during *Ship of Fools*, and started paying attention to his design work. So it was a combination of learning from those two, and importing design into *Bulletproof Monk*—which just came out in trade. And, even though it's three years old, and it's before my style kind of changed, I'm still very happy with it. So that was the first time I started paying attention to design.

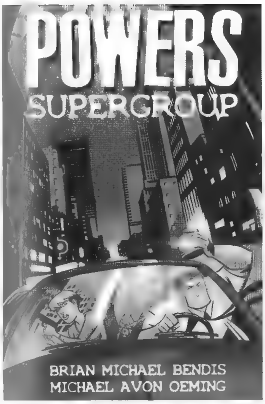
Then, once *Powers* started, that's when I really started taking cues from Brian and learning a lot about designing a clearer sense of storytelling. Partially from his panel layouts, and partially from the transition of styles that I was going through, when I was picking up more on the Bruce Timm and Alex Toth stuff. That was a huge, huge help.

CBM: What aspects did you pull from Toth?

Oeming: It took me a long time to learn from Toth, he's so deceptive. It's so difficult to look at his work and figure out exactly what he's doing. So, early on, I think I'd first become aware of his work when I was doing *Footsoldiers*. And if you look at *Footsoldiers*, there's a lot of black there, but I don't think I understood how I was using it. It just took me a lot of years to decipher what it was about Toth that I loved, and what was so strong about his work. And I don't think it really clicked until I hit my Bruce Timm interest, and then, with a combination of the two, like somehow learning more about Bruce's work opened up my eyes to what it was about Toth's work that worked, and vice versa. Then, once I'd gotten there, and I figured out simplifying the form, taking out the lines and stuff, and combining that with the use of black in composition, that's when things clicked in together.

I think largely from Toth, it was just simplifying. Which, oddly enough, it takes years to learn how to simplify. I was reading…I forget where the quote comes from; it might be from Robert McKee's book on story…. It was a quote about somebody who had written somebody else a letter, it was a lengthy letter, and then ended it by apologizing, saying that they wished they had more time to write a shorter letter—because it takes more time to learn how to simplify things. And that's absolutely true. It took me years to learn how to get simple, and that's largely what I learned from Toth.

A fine example of not only a typical "talking heads" moment from Bendis and Oeming's **Powers**, but one that also displays the team's use of timing to express subtle and hidden emotions.



The Bendis-Oeming **Powers** series mixes homicide investigation and super-heroics to create something quite unique...and extremely entertaining.

CBM: That's a really interesting and telling observation, because, in the common wisdom, it should be easier. After all, you have to draw fewer lines if it's simple, right? But that's simply not true, is it? Those lines left are so important.

Oeming: Oh yeah. Well, especially when you grow up like I did, loving somebody like Art Adams. [General laughter] Art Adams, and Michael Golden, these guys to me were gods! Or Moebius, all that little line work stuff. I just absolutely loved it. I spent so much time trying to be Art Adams when I was younger, and then, later on, trying to be Michael Golden or Kevin Nowlan, and just not learning to be myself. And it was only when I learned to be myself that I was able to take the influences that I had, like Toth and Bruce Timm, and open it up into whatever it was the way I saw it. So it's really, really difficult to do just simple lines. Sometimes even now, I struggle. I want to get it simpler. I look at guys like Paul Grist on *Kane*, it's like, "God, if I could only do that!" If I could get that simple, that would be great.

When Mignola draws a page, he draws everything. I've seen his pencils, and the dude, he draws everything. He's very detailed. And then he's able to go through and sacrifices everything to the brush and just blacks it all out. He's amazing.

CBM: What are some of the other important things that you've learned from Bendis?

Oeming: For me, the main thing I got from Brian was pacing—learning how to slow down, how to really take your time telling a story. And that's a tricky thing to say, especially for people starting out, because the danger is you won't have the time to take to tell your story, because your book will get freakin' canceled before you have the time to get to the set part. But at *Powers*, and you look at the really slow growth between Walker and Deena, between their characters, there's some shit that's coming up there that people are absolutely going to love; and they're going to love it ten times better because it's happening in issue #25, instead of happening in issue #4. And it makes the characters that much more real to people.

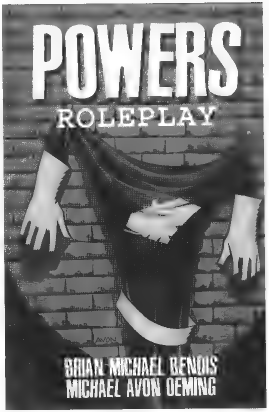
I think, actually, most of my writing style that I have now, I've picked up from working with Brian. It just comes from working with him, you know? So definitely my writing, and my visual pacing, has been very influenced by Brian's work. Which, in turn, has been very influenced by guys like Howard Chaykin, and his set of influences, and how he interpreted those influences, as well.

And then, of course, Chaykin was influenced by Toth, who was influenced by Hugo Pratt, who was influenced by blah-blah-blah and it just keeps on going. Which is why if you ever send a letter to Alex Toth, the thing he just drills into your head is, "Just draw from life," and there's so many people to learn from, other than the comic book people.

CBM: Anything in particular you learned from Jim Krueger while working on *Foot Soldiers*?

Oeming: I think, from Jim, there was some writing stuff that I learned from him. I learned how to implement certain storytelling techniques. I learned about the double entendre, I think, which Jim is the master of. If you look at all his different creations there, they all have these great double meanings to them. And meaning is thick in his writing. You know, his characters mean something. The Second Story Kid, who tells tall stories and lies, and his boots elevate him, literally as well as figuratively, like his tall stories, so his character is everything that his name implies. And he's got tons of characters and story ideas like that. It's a little heavy-handed, but it's great. I think it's perfect for comics. So that's one thing I learned from him, and it's great.

Another example of Oeming stretching himself as a creator, the SF-influenced **Six** one-shot was published by Image in 2004.



First released bearing the Image banner, **Powers**, which has produced a total of six trade collections to date, is now being published by Icon, Marvel's new creator-owned imprint.

CBM: Let's talk a little about the influence that Neil Vokes has had on you. What were some of the things that you learned from him?

Oeming: He taught me a lot about loosening up with my work. Because I was very anal with the work, early on. I was in my Art Adams phase, and trying to keep everything perfect. And he really taught me how to loosen up on the page.

Neil just really introduced me to a lot of artists otherwise I wouldn't have looked at. And I think one of the most important things I get from Neil, when you're actually talking about the page, is a sense of environment. When you look at Neil's pages, everything's on there. You look at a page and you really feel a world. You don't just see the characters in the foreground. He's just got so much going on in the backgrounds, and they feel so real and alive. He's got such a great sense of environment that often, when he's slow in work, I'll hire him to do backgrounds for me.

CBM: Would it be accurate to say that Eisner's had some little affect upon your new work, too?

Oeming: Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. Will is definitely an influence, too. That's my dream, to kind of be like Will Eisner. Not in the sense of his greatness, but in the sense of being able to live as long as he has, and done as much as he has, and still be able to do new work.

CBM: What kind of influence did Will have on your storytelling sensibilities, because I'd imagine they were fairly pronounced?

Oeming: Oh, absolutely. And, again, with pacing. One of my favorite books of his is *The Building*. Great story, great pacing. He's the master of the silent story, of being able to just show events happening. He was a big influence. I think Eisner's a great storyteller, and I learned a lot from him.

CBM: I know that you corresponded early on with Steve Rude. What were some of the things you learned from him?

Oeming: He's great. He would take my photocopies and write notes all over them and send them back. And he drew on top of them, sometimes, to show me how to make characters more fluid. Mostly it wasn't so much about storytelling and things like that, it was mostly about keeping things more fluid. And then, reading about his own work through his sketchbooks where he'd talk about stuff like how to keep a page from becoming convoluted or cluttered, how to do your thumbnails...

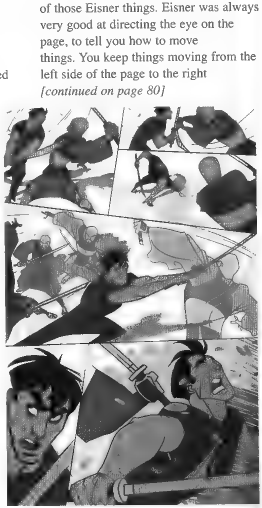
You know, he literally draws his thumbnails the size of his thumb, and you can see the composition right there on the page. And that is a great way to simplify work. Steve was really great in teaching me about form, and structure of the body, and keeping things fluid.

I think one of my biggest influences, talking about Steve made me think about that, because of what I was saying about the fluidity and stuff, is just learning from animation. I had started studying a lot of animation. Like I got *The Iron Giant* on DVD, and a bunch of the Disney films, and just really paid attention to how their bodies are smooth and fluid, and how to use tangents—how to move the eye with the line work. A lot of cell animation is like that. It's just so instantly fluid and recognizable and conservative in its line. So I think that I learned from a combination of Steve Rude and animation.

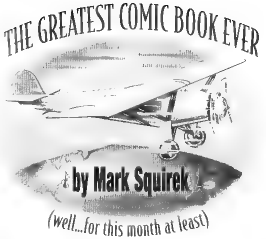
CBM: That kind of design approach must really help you guide the reader's eye to the next balloon, or whatever you want them to focus on.

Oeming: Definitely. I think that's one of those Eisner things. Eisner was always very good at directing the eye on the page, to tell you how to move things. You keep things moving from the left side of the page to the right

[continued on page 80]



This interior page from **Bastard Samurai** features work by an Oeming still stripping away the trappings of his older, more realistic look, and before he spent so much time thinking about he design of each page.



A Study in Scarlet
"Classics Illustrated" #110

For some insane reason, when I was a kid I wanted to be a detective. It was my sole goal to ferret out a crime, connect the patterns that the criminal would inevitably leave behind, and astound everyone with my insight, deductive skills and dazzling wit. If possible, I planned to do this in some sort of elaborate, yet fear-inducing costume. If no costume was available, I would do it in a deerstalker cap.

You can clearly blame this desire on comics. Batman was a detective, so was Green Arrow (admittedly to a much lesser degree). Those two heroes were responsible for leading me to discover the world's greatest Detective, Sherlock Holmes. Comics had arrived first in my consciousness, but meeting Sherlock Holmes wasn't far behind.

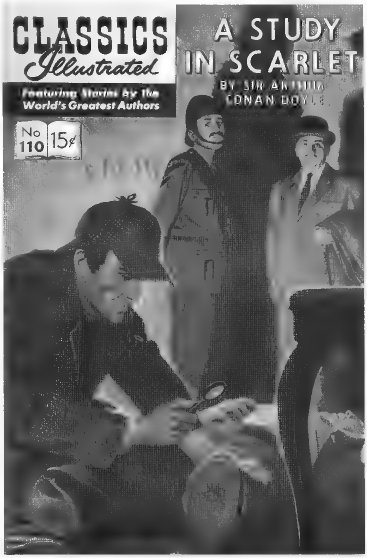
Every Batman story that I ran across was devoured by my eight or nine year old brain. Some of these Batman comics would occasionally reference Holmes and I always wondered who that was. Forty years removed from that time in my life; there is one story that still sticks out. At some point a Batman comic had portrayed Alfred dressed like Sherlock Holmes. Complete with a magnifying glass and a tweed cap, he amazed Batman with his incredible skills as a detective. This story was either in an Eighty-Page Giant that I had read, or a coverless comic that someone had purloined from the barbershop and somehow put in my room. This was my first exposure to the great English detective. Since I knew that Sherlock Holmes came from regular books, it was only a matter of time until I found out who he was.

Luckily my family was a regular visitor at the North Olmsted Public Library, so it only took a short while for me to get my hands on several books about the detective. At the very same time, I realized that a local TV station in Cleveland was running Sherlock Holmes movies on Sunday mornings. Since I had heard about Sherlock Holmes in a Batman comic book, and was now trying to read the stories, I decided to watch one of these movies. Just like with comics, it was a match made in heaven. Within a week or two, there was a whole new world opening up to me.

I remember sitting there transfixed at the marvelous deductive skills he displayed. He was better than Batman, but a little more boring. As the weeks went by and I started to watch all of the movies in the series, I did develop a problem or two with the series. The biggest problem was that the movies never seemed to follow the story they appeared to be based on. Something always seemed changed. One movie had shown him in old London with the Hound of the Baskervilles, and another one portrayed him as alive in a World War Two-era Washington DC where he fought Nazi Spies. As long as he caught the respective murderer or spy, I was generally happy. I could easily see that Batman had patterned his deductive skills on Holmes' logic.

Now if only there were some Sherlock Holmes comic books....

The Catholic grade school that I attended supported comics. There was a weekly comic named *Treasure Chest* that



you could subscribe to. I read it religiously. It was a mixture of sports and dogma that still rests heavily somewhere in the back of my brain. Since the Church obviously approved of comics, it only made sense that the nun in the library would know if there were Sherlock Holmes comics available. That was the day I learned to never ask a nun if comics were available from St. Richard's school library. The ruler came down across my knuckles before I had a chance to blink.

"Comic books" she bellowed as her slight eyebrows disappeared under the roof of her habit. "Do your parents know that you are destroying your mind?"

Stunned by the unexpected blow to the knuckles and cautious of receiving another I told her they had no idea.

"Well," she started, "I shall most certainly tell them the next time I see them. Now get out of here." With that she raised the ruler over her head and prepared to swipe at my now-raw knuckle one more time.

Summoning the powers of the Flash, I left a vapor trail in my wake and headed out into the hall. There I walked slowly to the bus and tried to figure out what could possibly make comics evil. Didn't this very same school sell one to me every single week?

The next day, Sister Myles, the one teacher I really, really liked, asked me if I could stay after class for a second. She asked me about my visit to the library yesterday and told me she had heard all about it at dinner that night (nuns ate real food? Boy was I surprised, I though they just lived to torment third-graders). She smiled and opened her bottom desk drawer. From those depths she pulled out what looked to be several comics. They didn't look like any other comics I had seen, they had a yellow box in the corner and they each had a different title. None of the covers looked the same.

She smiled and said. "There is nothing wrong with young boys reading comic books. Here are some that I like. You don't have to give them back to me, but just don't tell anyone where you got them, ok? If someone asks, just tell them you took them from the dentist office."

How did she know that I had been stealing comics from my dentist? First I find out that nuns eat dinner and now I find out that they read comics. In addition, they also know about me when I am not at school. This was amazing.

(It took a few years for me to realize that my Mom was a substitute teacher at the school and that she and Sister Myles probably talked about me.)

I took the gift from her and she said "One of those is books is pretty scary, but I think that you are old enough to handle it. Run out and get the bus, you don't want to have to walk home again."

She smiled and watched me put the books in a folder that I had. Backing out of the room, I remember looking at her like she had just given me a piece of the moon. It still glowed with the reflection of the sun and needed to be hidden from the government.

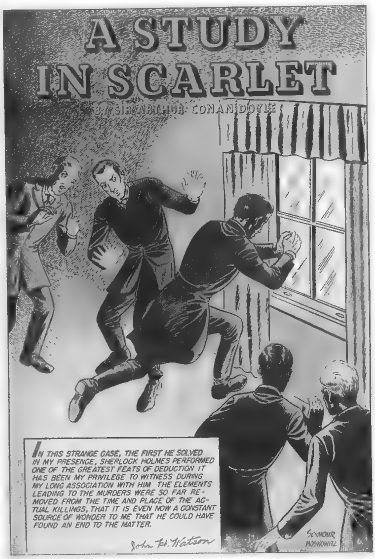
Once on the bus, in a back seat by myself, I took the books out of my folder. There were three of them and the yellow box in the corner said *Classics Illustrated*. This was something I had never heard of before and my curiosity was registering at a near nuclear level.

The first one I easily recognized, it was the *Three Musketeers*. I had seen that book in my Dad's study. The next two titles shattered my third-grade brain.

The second book was called *3 Famous Mysteries* (*Classics Illustrated* #21) and the very first famous mystery was Sherlock Holmes in *The Sign of the Four*. The other two mysteries were really strange. One was by a guy named Poe and the other story was by someone with three names, Guy De Maupassant.

The last book was the best of the lot. It was an entire book devoted to Sherlock Holmes by the original author, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. It was even a book I had just read! *A Study in Scarlet* is *Classics Illustrated* #110. Finding these titles was a revelation.

Most histories written about the *Classics Illustrated* title emphasize the spirit in which they came about. The idea


A STUDY IN SCARLET
BY SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE
IN THIS STRANGE CASE, THE FIRST HE SOLVED IN MY PRESENCE, SHERLOCK HOLMES PERFORMED ONE OF THE GREATEST FEATS OF DEDUCTION IT HAS BEEN MY PRIVILEGE TO WITNESS DURING MY LONG ASSOCIATION WITH HIM. THE ELEMENTS LEADING TO THE MURDERS WERE SO FAR REMOVED FROM THE TIME AND PLACE OF THE ACTUAL KILLINGS, THAT IT IS EVEN NOW A CONSTANT SOURCE OF WONDER TO ME THAT HE COULD HAVE FOUND AN END TO THE MATTER.
John H. Watson

came from Albert L. Kanter. It was his hope to marry the incredibly popular form of comics to the books of classic literature. He felt that by introducing kids to the classics through comics, they would be inspired to read the originals.

The standard joke is that by doing this, Kanter actually helped a million kids with their book reports. The truth is that many kids were inspired to go to the actual books and read them. After Sister Myles had given me those three issues, I went on to find more and more of the *Classics Illustrated* books. Through them I met Jules Verne, Mark Twain, Jack London and a host of others. Sometimes I read the *Classics Illustrated* first; sometimes I read the actual book. Either way, the comic did help me learn to enjoy both comics and books on a different level.

The title is much-maligned and almost forgotten except by a handful of dedicated collectors. Those collectors and the title deserve better treatment. It is by far the most challengng title to collect on a serious level. The variations of cover art, interior art and printings can drive you absolutely nuts, but the rewards are great.

The most difficult part to understand is when collectors speak of the HRN number. This is short for Highest Reorder Number. Every single *Classics Illustrated* contained a solicitation for the entire line that had preceded the issue you were holding. All the titles listed in that ad are available for reorder directly from the publisher. The earlier editions of the title would often have the list on either of the inside covers; later editions put the list on the back cover.

So, even though I have *A Study in Scarlet*, which is *Classics Illustrated* #110, I need to look somewhere in the book for the ad that lists the entire *Classics Illustrated* back catalog. This issue's ad stops at issue #165. So, that is my HRN number, 165. It is the highest numbered book I can reorder from the publisher.

Now that I have a basic grasp of the importance of certain issues in the run, I know how lucky I was to encounter *A Study in Scarlet* at such a young age. The title was only reprinted once, which makes it a bit of a tough find for collectors.

The art for Classics Illustrated could vary from depressing to magnificent. The art for *A Study in Scarlet* wasn't up to the standards of DC, but it was good enough to keep my mind occupied. The interiors were by Seymour Moskowitz, who also did the art for #107, *King of the Khyber Rifles* by Talbot Mundy. His lines are strong and he makes some very interesting choices in perspective. It appears that his work only appeared in *Classics Illustrated*.

Classics Illustrated covered the work of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle several times during their 169-issue run. Issue #33 was *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* and collectors consider that issue to have one of the classic covers of the title's run by Henry Keifer. They also covered one of Doyle's non-Holmes books, *The White Company* in issue #102.

To this day I love reading the original *Classics Illustrated*. They are still occasionally referenced in modern pop culture. They are good for a laugh in the baseball movie *Major League*, but the real point is that the ball players are reading them. New versions of the title have been attempted by both First and Acclaim. There is also a current reprint series of *Classics Illustrated Jr.*, which were aimed at the very youngest of readers. There is a terrific website devoted to *Classics Illustrated*. Take a minute to visit www.classiccentral.com. There are also several good histories available. The title is a fascinating concept that may be more influential that we realize.

Yes, I did an occasional book report from them, but they also made me want to read *Moby Dick* when I was 12. I just re-read both the *Classics Illustrated* and the book about five years ago. It means a whole different thing when you are in your forties. Thankfully I read it when I was twelve so there is something to compare the experience to. I maintain that it may not actually be about a whale.

COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE

BACK ISSUE DEPARTMENT

These issues are available...

#65 Pre-Code Crime, Bob Kane $8
#72 Iron Man & Subby, Larry Lieber Part I $8
#79 Blue Beetle, Fred Guardineer, Captain Action $8
#83 Magnus, Saturn Girl, Plastic Man $8
#84 Morrow, Ditko, Romita Sr., Brainiac $8
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#86 Perez Part I, Bronze Age, Whitman Mystery Part II $8
#87 George Evans, Detectives Inc. $8
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#90 Patriotic issue, Bob Lubbers, George Perez Part III $8
#91 Johnny Craig, Harry "A" Chesler $8
#92 Joe Kubert, Eddie Stanky, Mary Worth $8
#93 Alex Raymond, Flash Gordon, Gail Simone $8
#94 GA Green Lantern, Spectre, Perez Wrap-up $8
#95 Disney strip art, Miracleman $8
#96 Milton Caniff, Marc Hempel $8
Sp #5Spider-Man, Gerber Sticker Set #8 $12
#97 Curt Swan, T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents $8
#98 Western: Dick Ayers, Graham Ingels, John Severin $8
#99 Marvel 1965, Iron Man, Hulk, Transformers $8
#100 Charles Schulz, H. J. Ward, Pulp Roots of Batman $8
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#108 End of DC's SA, Geo. Carlson, GA Black Market $9
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CBM BACK ISSUES
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With Two Mighty Words and a Glorious Bolt of Lightning:

How Mac Raboy's

Magical Talent Provided Inspiration to a Young Boy

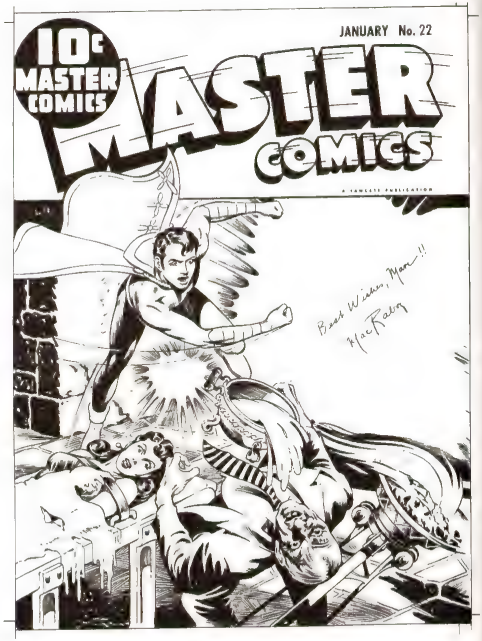
by Keif A. Fromm

Persevering. Proficient. Perfect. How can three words describe a man so appropriately, when we really know so little about him?

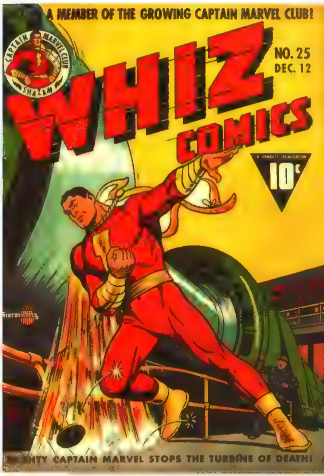
The gentleman in question was no mere hack cartoonist, but rather an illustrator with unbelievable talent and insightful vision. With few people to imitate and even fewer people to credit him, he helped form the comic book industry. He was an artist ahead of his time. His name was Emanuel "Mac" Raboy. Though Fawcett's *Master Comics* was really "just" a comic book, it was so much more to me. The stories Raboy depicted were unlike any others I had seen before. His use of cast shadows, broken-paneled layouts, and an unparalleled sense of detail made every tale he rendered an unforgettable treasure to behold and savor.

In order to understand why I've chosen to talk about Raboy's artistry, you have to know a little bit about me first. From the age of nine to fifteen, I suffered from constant childhood illness much in the same way that Freddy Freeman did. For a large part of my childhood, I endured continual stays in Manhattan's Mount Sinai Hospital. Under such conditions, what's a child supposed to do for a sense of release? In my case, I began reading, collecting and developing a further appreciation of Golden Age comic books.

Every day I was being continuously poked and prodded; but in the comics no one got hurt, no one got hospitalized and the good guys always won. This alternate



Original cover art to **Master Comics** #22 by Mac Raboy, featuring the very first appearance of Captain Marvel, Jr. (Jan 1942). See facing page for the comic as printed.



Master **Comics** #21 (Dec 1941) features Part 1 of Captain Marvel Junior's "origin trilogy" and a spectacular cover illustrated by Mac Raboy.

Whiz **Comics** #25 (Dec 1941) features Part 2 of Captain Marvel Junior's "origin trilogy" and an awesome cover illustrated by C. C. Beck.

Master **Comics** #22 (Jan 1942) features Part 3 of Captain Marvel Junior's "origin trilogy" and a historic Mac Raboy cover featuring the very first cover appearance of Captain Marvel Junior. (The cover of **Master Comics** #22 is also the only time that Mac Raboy would ever illustrate a "bondage cover" in his entire comic book career.)

four-color reality gave me hope and stamina to strive to survive. The comic book character that almost single-handedly granted me this empowered will to live was not too unlike me—his name was Captain Marvel Junior!

In his alter ego of Freddy Freeman, he was crippled, walked with one crutch and was virtually helpless. But as Captain Marvel Junior, the word fear had no meaning to him; no opponent could thwart this blue-and-gold, pint-sized powerhouse. Because of my comic books, I was as mentally stout as the greatest superhero; but physically, I was just as frail as some of those heroes' alter egos. So you see, I was both as unfit and helpless as Freddy Freeman and as stalwart and invincible as Captain Marvel Junior. When

[continued on page 57]

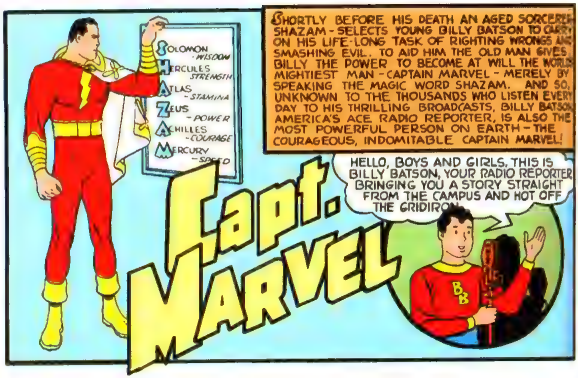
THE RISE OF

CAPTAIN MARVEL

by Will Murray

Who created Captain Marvel, the World's Mightiest Mortal? Many were involved in the genesis of Superman's greatest rival in that formative year of 1939.

"I was responsible, I feel, for Captain Marvel," asserted Fawcett Publications circulation director Roscoe K. Fawcett. "I got us into the comic book business. I said, 'Give me a Superman, only have his other identity be a 10 or 12 year old boy rather than a man.' I put Al Allard in charge of coordinating the project with some assistance from Editorial Director Ralph Daigh."


SHORTLY BEFORE HIS DEATH AN AGED SORCERER, SHAZAM - SELECTS YOUNG BILLY BATSON TO CARRY ON HIS LIFE-LONG TASK OF RIGHTING WRONGS AND SMASHING EVIL. TO AID HIM THE OLD MAN GIVES BILLY THE POWER TO BECOME AT WILL THE WORLD'S MIGHTIEST MAN - CAPTAIN MARVEL - MERELY BY SPEAKING THE MAGIC WORD SHAZAM. AND SO, UNKNOWN TO THE THOUSANDS WHO LISTEN EVERY DAY TO HIS THRILLING BROADCASTS, BILLY BATSON, AMERICA'S ACE RADIO REPORTER, IS ALSO THE MOST POWERFUL PERSON ON EARTH - THE COURAGEOUS, INDOMITABLE CAPTAIN MARVEL!
SOLOMON - WISDOM
HERCULES - STRENGTH
ATLAS - STAMINA
ZEUS - POWER
ACHILLES - COURAGE
MERCURY - SPEED
HELLO, BOYS AND GIRLS, THIS IS BILLY BATSON, YOUR RADIO REPORTER BRINGING YOU A STORY STRAIGHT FROM THE CAMPUS AND HOT OFF THE GRIDIRON
Capt. MARVEL

Daigh turned to Fawcett editor William Parker, whose only discernable qualification was that he had majored in classic literature and Greek mythology at Princeton.

"A few days later Bill came into my office with a one-page written suggestion that our superhero feature a *team*, probably four, under the command of *one* hero Bill identified as 'Captain Thunder.' The 'Captain' was to have a squad of lieutenants, each a specialist, each possessing a singular attribute traceable to gods such as Hercules, Atlas, Zeus, Achilles and Mercury. 'Captain Thunder' would select and assign the properly-empowered lieutenant to deal with the specific test in the story at hand. But this novel, multiple-hero approach was finally deemed cumbersome and lacked opportunity for the reader's self-identification with a single hero.

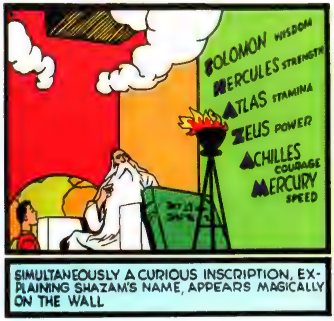
Recalled artist Clarence Calvin Beck, plucked from the company's art staff to draw the new feature, "I just took it on as another job of illustrating…. We spent weeks working out the characters for our stories. Bill typed descriptions of various characters on yellow copy paper for me to draw. I drew whatever he specified. Many, many characters were born and died during those weeks."

All did not go smoothly in the beginning, recalled Beck. "The drawings all disappeared, went upstairs to the penthouse where the big bosses work, and Parker came back down and said, 'No good. Do more.' Bill and I could feel that any time we tried to do something good, or better than Superman, it was nixed. Finally Bill Parker said, 'Dammit, all they want is a carbon copy of Superman, and I'm not going to give it to them.' So we proceeded to give them a character that *looked* somewhat like Superman, but in character was completely different."

"Bill left that decisive meeting very enthused," said Daigh, "after proposing that the lone 'Captain Thunder's' alter-ego be a small, young boy, subsequently named Billy Batson, a newsboy with the enviable power to turn himself into an adult manifesting the diverse super qualities of Greek gods."

"Bill Parker would bring in ideas and gradually, over a few weeks, we got the character," explained Beck. "We both saw how poorly written and illustrated the superhero comic books were. We decided to give our readers a real comic book, drawn in comic-strip style and telling an imaginative story, based not on the hackneyed formulas of the pulp magazine, but going back to the old folk-tales and myths of classic times…. Fawcett was not very happy with the new character Parker came up with, but they decided to publish it anyway."

Key to the new character was an original origin. "Then it was determined that some sort of convincing device—possibly a magic word—should be invented for the Batson-to-Marvel transformation," explained Daigh. "This led to Bill's scrambling of the first letters of mythological charac-

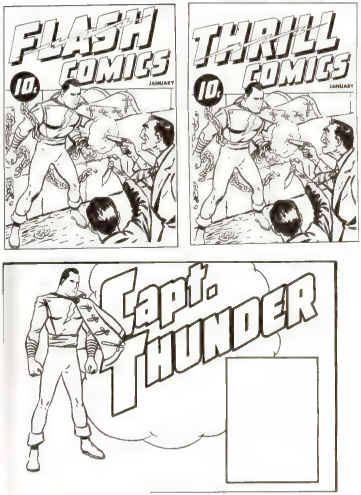


"The story was about Billy Batson and the ancient wizard Shazam, and told how the mad scientist Sivana was thwarted in his evil attempt to silence radio stations all over the world." recalled artist C.C. Beck.

ters, and the addition of the Biblical king of Israel, man of wisdom, Solomon. With the 'S' thus obtained, there evolved the powerful word that has remained in the English language...SHAZAM!" The name emblemized the wisdom of Solomon, the strength of Hercules, the stamina of Atlas, the power of Zeus, Achilles' courage and wing-footed Mercury's legendary speed.

Parker produced a script, which was given to Beck to render. "When I looked at the first Captain Marvel story," Beck later recounted, "I knew at once that *here* was a story worth illustrating! There was no pointless flying around and showing off, no padding, no 'Look Ma, I'm a super-hero!' Out of 72 panels, Captain Marvel appeared in 18, or one-fourth. The story was about Billy Batson and the ancient wizard Shazam, and told how the mad scientist Sivana was thwarted in his evil attempt to silence radio stations all over the world."

ALL MY LIFE I HAVE FOUGHT INJUSTICE AND CRUELTY. BUT I AM OLD NOW – MY TIME IS ALMOST UP. YOU SHALL BE MY SUCCESSOR MERELY BY SPEAKING MY NAME YOU CAN BECOME THE STRONGEST AND MIGHTIEST MAN IN THE WORLD – CAPTAIN MARVEL !
SPEAK MY NAME!



ABOVE: Various ashcan editions of Captain Marvel before his first appearance in *Whiz Comics*.

SHAZAM!
BLAM!
CAPTAIN MARVEL, I SALUTE YOU HENCEFORTH IT SHALL BE YOUR SACRED DUTY TO DEFEND THE POOR AND HELPLESS, RIGHT WRONGS AND CRUSH EVIL EVERYWHERE.
YES, SIRE.

Captain Marvel's origin from *Whiz Comics* #2 (Fawcett, Feb 1940).

But the project hit a series of strange snags. Comic books were booming. Superheroes were being developed at dozens of rival houses. A first issue of *Flash Comics* featuring Captain Thunder was drawn. Then rival publisher All American released their own *Flash Comics*, featuring a humorous young hero called Johnny Thunder, who transformed into a human Thunderbolt after saying the magic word "Cei-U." This prompted a hasty change to *Thrill Comics*. Before Fawcett could go to press, coincidence struck again when Better issued *Thrilling Comics*. And still another publisher, Fiction House, put out a character

Captain Marvel's first appearance *Whiz Comics* #2 (Fawcett, Feb 1940).

named Captain Terry Thunder in *Jungle Comics* #1. Fawcett's *Thrill Comics* finally became *Whiz Comics* (inspired by pioneering Fawcett humor magazine, *Capt. Billy's Whiz Bang*) and Captain Marvel received his rightful name.

"At the next meeting the name 'Captain Thunder' was discarded and 'Captain Marvel' was adopted as more befitting a hero of marvelous capabilities," noted Daigh.

Artist Pete Costanza claimed to have inspired the good captain's final name. With the first story sitting completed but for a new name for Captain Thunder, Costanza was hired to start work with the Golden Arrow backup feature.

"When the character's name was being changed from 'Captain Thunder' I suggested 'Captain Marvelous' instead," Costanza related. "This was shortened to 'Marvel,' so I can't take all the credit."

"Yes," confirmed Beck, "Cap was originally called Captain Thunder. I had to change the copy, but no one ever told me why. *Whiz* #1 was called the 'ash-can copy,' published only to send to Washington to secure copyright. I saw a copy of it—it was in black and white and only a few pages long. It was not put on the market, as it was incomplete."

While the conceptualization of Captain Marvel was arrived at by consensus, one man really drove events. "Actually, it was mostly Ralph Daigh, who was the managing editor," allowed C. C. Beck. "His job was to create something which they could sell. So all power to him."

For Captain Marvel's official uniform, Beck adapted a quasi-military costume he'd drawn for the light operetta, *The Student Prince*. Beck hardly changed it at all, simply placing a distinctive lightning bolt on his chest. "Captain Marvel's costume was that of a musical-comedy military officer, as befitted the title of 'Captain,'" explained Beck. "He did not wear a circus strongman's outfit, nor did he have a mask or spiked talons or a radioactive aura around him or set himself on fire. In fact, he had no special powers at all until a story called for one. Then, as he was a creation of magic, he had whatever power was needed."

The costume was colored as an afterthought. Beck claimed he gave it no serious consideration, and with a lighting bolt chest emblem that had to be yellow, Captain Marvel could have been colored anything from green to purple with good effect. Ultimately it was decided red would best distinguish him from Superman.

His simple yet striking appearance was left entirely to Beck. "Captain Marvel's powers were all myth-derived and magical," asserted Beck, "not super-scientific and merely manufactured to fill a publisher's demands. The stories were just a spin-off of the old myths. That's one reason Parker's basing it on mythological characters was better than the phony science fiction. It was my intention that Captain Marvel should be a good-natured, all-purpose 'genie,' with the sometimes quizzical, sometimes beleaguered look of Fred MacMurray."

MacMurray evidently noticed. In a dream sequence in the 1943 romantic comedy, *No Time for Love*, he played a billowy-caped superhero generally resembling Captain Marvel.

The MacMurray connection is not as improbable as it at first seems. Fawcett was the leading publisher of movie fan magazines. Photo reference was as convenient as a nearby file cabinet. "I based the characters on famous actors of the time," confessed Beck, "because I knew I couldn't really create a character out of my head. Nobody can create a character; characters create themselves in answer to what the people are looking for. At that time, Fred MacMurray was a very

According to artist C.C. Beck, "It was my intention that Captain Marvel should be a good-natured, all-purpose 'genie,' with the sometimes quizzical, sometimes beleaguered look of Fred MacMurray."

popular actor and I used him as a basis for Captain Marvel. He had kind of a slanted forehead, wavy hair, and a big chin."

Not everyone came out of a photo file. "Bill Parker's initial script gave no description of the ancient wizard, Shazam," Beck recounted. "I drew him as a combination Moses-Merlin-good magician figure, sort of a benign semi-Biblical character. After giving his powers to Billy, old Shazam disappeared for good in the original story. Later, Shazam was revived, appeared in spirit form or was seen in flashback scenes. When drawn by other artists, he sometimes appeared evil and threatening, or like a madman. Nobody seemed to realize that I had drawn him as Captain Marvel as an old man. He had the same features, just altered by old age."

Captain Marvel finally debuted in *Whiz Comics* #2, dated February 1940. What *Marvel Mystery Comics* publisher Martin Goodman thought of this can only be surmised. But he was soon publishing new characters like Black Marvel and Marvel Boy.

"Captain Marvel was a big hit right from the beginning," Beck later claimed. "Readers loved this huge, red-suited character…who was really only the boy, Billy Batson, magically grown up. They could identify with Billy, a kid like themselves, much more than they could with Clark Kent, a sort of ordinary, middle-aged commuter type." For the first year, Captain Marvel engaged in a running battle with what would become his eternal nemesis.

"Great heroes in stories must have great villains to fight," explained Beck, "and Captain Marvel had some of the greatest. One of the very first ones he faced was 'The World's Maddest Scientist,' Sivana. Captain Marvel himself was a creation of magic, which science has always opposed. Sivana, a scientist, fought Captain Marvel for years and never won."

As he had with Shazam, Parker reached into mythology for the arch villain's name. The coinage was a conflation of two names out of Hindu mythology, Siva and Nirvana.

Artistically, Beck modeled Sivana on a druggist named Horne, but he closely resembled an old Brick Bradford villain named Timak. Captain Marvel and Dr. Sivana appeared to be polar opposites. "There would have been nothing amusing in the stories if Captain Marvel had spent all his time beating up scrawny old Sivana, who was three times his age and one-third his size," the artist admitted. "Our good writers therefore had to create trick after trick for Sivana to pull on Captain Marvel not only to keep him from being beaten up but actually to make the reader think that perhaps, just once, the Big Red Cheese would lose the battle. He never did, of course."

Captain Marvel was quickly awarded his own title. The Fawcett staff was too busy to handle it, so they turned to the originators of Timely Comics' Captain America for help, Joe Simon and Jack Kirby.

"Their problem was they had one week to get the first issue of *Captain Marvel Adventures* to the printers," recalled Simon. "Jack Kirby lived in Brooklyn and I lived in Elmhurst,

THE FOOLS! THEY WOULDN'T PAY WHAT I DEMANDED! AT MIDNIGHT WE WILL DRIVE EVERY RADIO STATION FROM THE AIR — FOREVER!
IN A FEW SECONDS SIVANA'S FRIENDSHIP RADIO SILENCER WILL DRIVE EVERY BROADCASTING STATION FROM THE AIRWAVES — UNLESS CAPTAIN MARVEL CAN STOP HIM!
SUDDENLY ON THE TELEVISION SCREEN APPEARS THE FACE OF SIVANA, MAD SCIENTIST WHO HAS THEREBY VOWED TO DESTROY RADIO UNLESS HE IS PAID $50,000,000.

Captain Marvel's first great super villain was Dr. Sivana.

***Special Edition Comics* #1 (Fawcett, 1940), the new magazine paved the way for Captain Marvel Adventures early in 1941.**

Queens. Jack and I got a hotel room around the corner from where we were doing Captain America. We just stayed in that room and worked until we finished the book—which we finished within the week."

Titled *Special Edition Comics* #1, the new magazine paved the way for *Captain Marvel Adventures* early in 1941.

Other outside artists were also recruited, with unhappy results. Recalled Beck, "As we started to expand, the art director sent me out to all the art schools to try to get the brightest students. We found some petty good ones that way but they were too inexperienced. So, I said, 'Well, let's get some established illustrators.' The work of these people were so substandard and so distorted from the way I had shown things in the early *Whiz Comics* that Fawcett's art director Al Allard was moved to call all work back into his control and to set me up as chief artist to set the pace and standards from now on."

Change also struck the one-man band that had been single-handedly scripting Captain Marvel, Bill Parker. "He wrote the whole first issue of *Whiz*,, which came out in January of 1940," said Beck. "He wrote several issues and then it expanded so fast that they opened up a room and suddenly there was an editorial staff…"

After Pearl Harbor, Bill Parker enlisted in the armed forces, never to return to his creation. His primary replacement was Rod Reed, later followed by pulp writers Joe Millard and Manly Wade Wellman. Beck took the time to pen "Captain Marvel and the Temple of Itzalotahu" in *Whiz* #22 (Oct 1941), his only published Marvel script.

Future head writer Otto Binder came in early on, doing backup features like Spy Smasher until editor France E. Herron said, "Okay, Otto, you're ready for Captain Marvel."

Otto Binder's first script was "Captain Marvel, King," in *Captain Marvel Adventures* #9 (Fawcett, Apr 9, 1942).

Binder's first script was "Captain Marvel, King," in *Captain Marvel Adventures* #9. A former science fiction pulp writer, he went on to become the series' most prolific and important scripter. His background as a prolific writer of pulp science fiction was perfect for the series.

"The moment I began writing them," Binder related, "I was a

C.C. Beck's original pencil sketch for *Whiz Comics* #22 (Fawcett, Octr 1941).

It was C.C. Beck's contention that Billy Batson was the real hero of all the Captain Marvel stories, from the first issue until the last.

captive of this new and colorful way of telling stories. Simple stories, yes, sometimes hardly any story between the 'must' action. But still, at least on Captain Marvel, I was able to do gentle satire (sometimes biting) and also develop a most unique personality—a story of a kind, bumbling, hulking crusader without armor, using his super-powers sparingly (one of the secrets of his success) and subject to all the whims and dreams and human fallacies which are part of all of us."

By contrast, Beck saw Captain Marvel in terms that would have horrified his fans.

"A necessary evil," remarked Beck. "And we could have done very well without him. If we could have kept him more in the background as a threat or a presence, it would have been better. The part I liked best was Billy Batson. It was Billy Batson who usually got into trouble in the Fawcett stories, not Captain Marvel, although the 'Big Red Cheese,' as he was sometimes called, also found himself in some embarrassing situations now and again, too, for another feature of his personality which distinguished him from other heroes of the day was that he was vulnerable—and as a result, often very, very funny!"

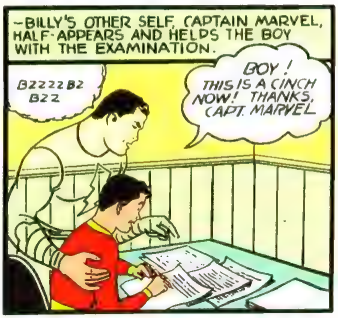
***Captain Marvel Adventures* #1 (Fawcett, 1941).**

"I'd hate to add up how many times Billy saved him with his wits," echoed Binder. "The Big Red Cheese was human to the core, whereas, in my opinion, most of the other super characters…were alien, almost austere, infallible and haughty—doing a machine-like job of nabbing crooks and crushing evil, without once taking off a moment to lounge around and relax."

"The publisher wasn't aware of it," insisted Beck, "but Billy Batson was the real hero of all the Captain Marvel stories, from the first issue until the last. At one time, believe it or not, the publisher sent down word to drop Billy from the stories, saying that he was only taking up room that could have been used to show Captain Marvel instead, and that he wasn't contributing anything to the stories. Fortunately, the editors paid no attention to so ridiculous a memo and Billy Batson continued to appear in every story. Without Billy Batson, Captain Marvel would have been merely another overdrawn, one-dimensional figure in a ridiculous costume, running around beating up crooks and performing meaningless feats of strength like all the other heroic figures of the time that were, with almost no exceptions, cheap imitations of Superman."

There was a set formula for Captain Marvel stories, one the artist stressed repeatedly. "Billy Batson started every story and ended every story," Beck said firmly. "In between, Captain Marvel appeared when he was needed, disappeared when he was not needed. The stories were about Billy Batson, not about the cavortings of a ridiculous superhero for whom the writers had to concoct new and more impossible demonstrations of his powers for each issue. While the use of a magic word was not new in storytelling, it *was* unique in comic books and made Fawcett's hero distinguishable from the others then appearing in comic books."

The metaphysical mechanics of the transformation was never fully explained. "We at Fawcett didn't bother about such esoteric details and simply treated it as if Captain Marvel was Billy as a grown man," explained Binder. "I know that Cap always referred to Billy as a separate person, and


-BILLY'S OTHER SELF, CAPTAIN MARVEL, HALF-APPEARS AND HELPS THE BOY WITH THE EXAMINATION.
BZZZZBZ BZZ
BOY! THIS IS A CINCH NOW! THANKS, CAPT. MARVEL

"I know that Cap always referred to Billy as a separate person, and vice-versa, so perhaps the more logical viewpoint is that they were separate individuals and that when one appeared, the other went into some sort of 'limbo'.... I think most readers simply assumed that Billy changed into the World's Mightiest Mortal." said writer Otto Binder.

COACH, I HATE TO ADMIT IT BUT I'M FEELING KIND OF LOUSY. I DON'T THINK I OUGHT TO PLAY SATURDAY.
AW, PISH TISH. OF COURSE YOU'LL PLAY, COSTANZA. GET IN THERE AND FORGET IT.

C.C. Beck would often draw his friend and co-worker Pete Costanza into Captain Marvel stories.

vice-versa, so perhaps the more logical viewpoint is that they were separate individuals and that when one appeared, the other went into some sort of 'limbo'.... I think most readers simply assumed that Billy changed into the World's Mightiest Mortal. That was the great secret of why Captain Marvel outsold Superman and all the other super-heroes. What boy reader, identifying with Billy, didn't feel the thrill of changing into a big and powerful hero? It was the perfect formula."

"In the first issue of *Whiz Comics* old Shazam told Billy that by speaking his name he would become Captain Marvel and vice versa," countered Beck. "It was that simple; I don't know why anyone ever felt the need to analyze it. Billy Batson was Captain Marvel—as a boy of fourteen. He had the same nose, cleft chin and dimples as Captain Marvel. Only, his eyes were different—and his hair became magically combed back when he changed to his adult form. We saw Captain Marvel as a sort of big brother brought in to solve problems that the boy hero, Billy, couldn't handle. He was bigger and stronger than Billy, but he was not a seven-foot-tall circus strongman or a creature from another world or one created by a mad scientist, as the superhero comics characters were."

Beck's unique vision for Captain Marvel did not long survive. It became a victim of his runaway success. "I'll not deny that Captain Marvel had become a superhero in both appearance and action quite early in his career," Beck freely admitted. "In the early issues his top was more like a jacket, but later he had to wear tights, just like all the other comic characters. After the first few issues Fawcett farmed out some of the work to other artists and writers, who proceeded to present the World's Mightiest Mortal as the World's Mightiest Imitation Superman flying, bouncing bullets off his chest, looking like a ham actor in a shoot-'em-up movie. In fact, I have always felt that flying figures in picture form are silly and unbelievable, and I would much sooner have never drawn them, but the publisher insisted on them. Most of the time Captain Marvel's ability to fly had little or nothing to do with the plots of the stories in which he appeared.

"In addition," Beck continued, "Fawcett created a whole line of Captain Marvel spin-off characters that were drawn by other artists in styles quite unlike mine. Finally the art director and I persuaded Fawcett to let me supervise the production of at least the Captain Marvel books. I was given the title of chief artist in charge of a studio filled with assistants and was given some name

Master Comics #27 (Fawcett, June 1942). Art by Mac Raboy.

recognition, but the writers were never given any credit at all, and to this day few people are aware that comic illustrators work from scripts instead of making everything up as they go along."

With Pete Costanza, Beck set up a studio devoted to the production of Captain Marvel, and only Captain Marvel. Their mission was to transform the flood of anonymous scripts into entertaining comic books. "I had three or four assistants that drew pretty good Captain Marvels," Beck allowed. "We had a studio out in Englewood, New Jersey, where the drawing was done. I'd turn that over to one of our layout men like Ed Robbins, who'd just lay it out, follow the story. I was in New York. They would finish the whole thing and send it to me. Then I would usually redraw the faces and leave the other things alone."

Costanza oversaw the platoon of artists hired for the task. "I began working at Fawcett in 1939, right before the release of *Whiz Comics*," Costanza related. "Beck and I struck up a great friendship which later developed into a full-fledged partnership. Beck was a cartoonist while I was a straight illustrator. I started illustrating Golden Arrow and later Ibis the Invincible in *Whiz Comics*. We combined our talents on Captain Marvel later."

"He and I complemented each other nicely," Beck stated. "Pete had his troubles, for artists of any worth are strong individuals, not sheep-like factory workers. We didn't try to force them into a mold, as a shop might have done, but let each man express himself in his drawings. Some of the books produced in those days have a dozen different techniques in their pages, while Captain Marvel appears now tall and slim, now short and stumpy, again perhaps seven feet tall and apparently molded in cement or alternatively as if he had been put together by Dr. Frankenstein just after he had found a heap of left-over muscles in a corner."

Artist Marc Swayze was hired in 1941 to help Beck and Costanza meet the burgeoning demand for Captain Marvel art. "They had sent me several sketches of a flying hero in a red suit," he recalled. "I didn't let on that I didn't even know the name of the character."

When editor Ed Herron told him, "We couldn't distinguish your art from Beck's," Swayze asked, "Who's Beck?"

Swayze developed into a key member of the Captain Marvel team who preferred to work alone rather than join the assembly-line approach Beck oversaw. "Considering Beck the number one Captain Marvel artist," Swazye later recounted. "I considered myself number two, probably because they told me I was. While on the Fawcett art staff, from 1940 to 1942, nobody produced more *Captain Marvel Adventures* art than I did. And as I look back over the books that were published at the time, I am convinced that I contributed more Captain Marvel scripts than any other artist, and more than some of the writers."

C.C. Beck's beautiful painted cover featuring Mary Marvel's premiere in *Captain Marvel Adventures* #18 (Fawcett, Dec 11, 1942).

Another key figure, editor Ed Herron, secretly scripted many early Captain Marvel tales under the unprinted pseudonym of "William Batstone." This was a violation of Fawcett policy, and when the truth was discovered, Herron was canned.

William Woolfolk settled in as the next most important Fawcett comics scripter. "For a long period Otto and I divided up the Captain Marvel tales. He did most of the Marvel Family stories and I wrote most of Captain Marvel Jr. stories."

For, under pressure from the higher-ups at Fawcett, spin-off characters were created. Ironically, Captain Marvel finally got to lead his platoon of superheroes, and justify his rank.

The first was Captain Marvel, Jr, created in 1941 by Ed Herron and drawn by Mac Raboy. He was crippled newsboy Freddy Freeman, who when he spoke that name "Captain Marvel" aloud, became a younger, blue-suited version of his hero. The character first appeared only scant months after Superman creator Jerry Siegel mention in an interview that he was considering a feature about Superman's adventures as a boy. The World's Most Sensational Boy beat Superboy into print by five years, landing in *Master Comics* and soon his own title. He was drawn in a more realistic style than his inspiration, and unlike Billy, guarded his dual identity carefully.

"Captain Marvel Jr. was created at the publisher's order," Beck related. "He was intended to capture the interest of younger readers and to compete with Batman's Robin and other junior super characters. Personally, I thought Captain Marvel Jr. to be a sickeningly sweet, non-comic and dull character, but some readers loved him. And Mary Marvel was created to attract girl readers. In my opinion, Mary Marvel was a weak, synthetic character also created on the order of the publisher. She never came to life in the way that Billy Batson and Captain Marvel did but always seemed wooden and artificial."

Mary Marvel was Billy Batson's long-lost twin sister. Otto Binder created her for *Captain Marvel Adventures* #18 (Dec 1942). Marc Swayze conceptualized her look, and wrote her second adventure, "The Training of Mary Marvel." Other than Beck, he was the only Captain Marvel artist who also scripted.

Swayze recalled, "Creating Mary was a fairly simple task—a face, a figure, a costume—all influenced in one way or another by Captain Marvel. My idea for Mary Marvel was that she would be of light heart, light hand, light step—a wisp of a teenager, never a grim super-person who might joy in bashing an opponent into a senseless mass, but who pleasantly and gracefully clipped him with her dainty fist or foot into slumberland."

Swayze hoped to draw the strip regularly. "I did the art for the first two Mary Marvel stories but was then told that the Captain Marvel stories were too important for me to leave the team who were producing Fawcett's top comic book character." Jack Binder took over the fledgling strip. His comics shop had been hired early on to help the Beck and Costanza Studio to meet the insatiable demand for Captain Marvel and his spin-offs. Jack was Otto's brother, and the man responsible for luring him into comic books.

"I had nothing to do with creating Mary Marvel," Otto said, "except that after I got hold of the character, I made it my personality. Her character had already been set before I got to her. I'll have to take credit for Freckles Marvel and Uncle Marvel, not as creations, but as persons. When the script was

Another C.C. Beck painted cover, *Captain Marvel Adventures* #17 (Fawcett, Nov 13, 1942).

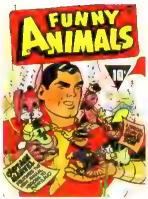
given to me, I created the personality of Uncle Marvel."

Otto Binder created most of the new characters. "I'm pretty sure Uncle Marvel sprang from my mind," he said, "but I can't be 100% certain. I know I did write the first Uncle Marvel story, as well as develop the character, as I did with Freckles Marvel. We wanted Mary Marvel to be a feature distinctive from the other two…less heroics and more human interest."

While Mary Batson also shouted "Shazam!" Mary Marvel derived her powers from a set of goddesses, beginning with Selena. "The original was Sappho," recalled Rod Reed, "but I killed her due to her lesbian lifestyle. I told Otto that ol' Sappho must go, and that's how Selena got in. Roger Fawcett may never have forgiven me for our loss of circulation among lesbians."

***Wow Comics* #9 (Fawcett, Jan 06, 1943). Art by Marc Swayze.**

The other goddesses were Hippolyta, Ariadne, Zephyrus, Aurora and Minerva. Mary Marvel soon took up residence in *Wow Comics*. Although their attributes were not as rigidly defined, it didn't seem to matter to the comics audience. They embraced her as warmly as they had Captain Marvel, whose adventures peaked at 2,600,000 annual sales in 1943.



***Fawcett's Funny Animals* #1 (Fawcett, 1942).**

As for Captain Marvel Jr., the main reason Freddy Freeman was required to shout "Captain Marvel!" instead of "Shazam!" was strictly commercial, according to Fawcett Executive Editor, Will Lieberson. "All those kids were going to read Captain Marvel Jr," he explained, "and every time they read a story about Junior we wanted to remind them there was a Captain Marvel *Senior* too, so they wouldn't neglect to buy more Fawcett comics."

One amusing spin-off was created by artist Chad Grothkopf in 1943 for *Fawcett's Funny Animals*. Editorial Director Ralph Daigh hired him to create a group of cartoon-style animal characters for the new comic book. The most popular proved to be Hoppy the Marvel Bunny.

"Captain Marvel was extremely popular so it just seemed like a good idea to do a take-off from it," Grothkopf recalled, "incorporating the similar costume along with Hoppy using the magic word 'Shazam!', and so on. However, my original concept for Hoppy the Marvel Bunny was somehow changed when the writers got ahold of it. Hoppy was supposed to dream about an adventure or wish about something and then by magic it would happen and he would become the Marvel Bunny. Then all he would have to do is say 'Shazam!' backwards to bring himself back again."

As related in *Funny Animals* #1, Hoppy was an "ordinary" rabbit who read *Captain Marvel Adventures*. Inspired by his hero, he shouted "Shazam!" and was granted the combined powers of the mythical Salamander, Hogules, Antlers, Zebreus, Abalone and Monkury. Hoppy was known as Captain Marvel Bunny, or Marvel Bunny for short. Inasmuch as he was a cartoon rabbit, he operated in his own reality and never once crossed paths with the Big Red Cheese.

By 1944, despite a crushing paper shortage that kept Fawcett and other comics houses from expanding, Fawcett's comics characters were selling a whopping 14 million copies that year.

Captain Marvel and company were at the top of their game. There was no place to go but down….

Next Issue: The Fall of Captain Marvel!

THE STAN LEE

OF 1943!

by Will Murray

The memorable and unusual Perkins creation 'The Weeper,' a character who is convinced that life is sad and that it's criminal for people to be happy.

Few remember Henry "Lynn" Perkins. Yet back in the Golden Age of Comics, he was a significant writer and editor. How significant? In addition to being a pivotal presence at Fawcett, where he inaugurated intriguing changes that smack of the kind of superhero revolution Stan Lee kicked off in 1961, Perkins constituted a one-man British invasion as well.

I never heard of Henry Perkins until the day I was going through bound library volumes of a forgotten 1940s periodical called *The Writer's Journal*. The April 1943 issue carried a cover story titled "Comic Books Turn Comic." It was a long interview/profile of Fawcett Comics Group associate editor Henry Perkins. Although I was researching another project, I knew I had to record this information. The problem was that *The Writer's Journal* was a tabloid newspaper. Its browning pages were crumbling into pulp dust. I could not photocopy it. Recognizing the significance of the piece, I laboriously hand copied all of the quotes and essential information. They were fascinating.

According to the *Journal*, Henry Perkins was born in Brazil of British parents. Life took him back to London, where he went to the School of Charterhouse. Writing was an early interest, and Perkins landed a reporting job on the *London Daily Mirror*. Relocating to Rio, he became a staff writer on the *Rio de Janeiro News*. In 1939, Perkins came to the US, where his writing and editing skills got him a position on the New York-based pulp magazines, *Weird Tales* and *Short Stories*. There, he came into contact with future comic book editor, Julius Schwartz.

"I was a literary agent before I got into comics," recalled Schwartz. "Among the magazines I dealt with was *Weird Tales*. The editor up there was Dorothy McIlwraith. To my knowledge, Perkins was her first reader. He had a strong British accent. He was quite tall and good-looking. Blond hair as I recall." Schwartz remembers him as Lynn Perkins, the first name an apparent diminutive of his middle name, Avelyn.

Soon mastering the position, Perkins grew bored with the work and sought out freelance opportunities. As the *Writer's Journal* explained it, "From the time of his arrival in this country, he had been fascinated by the quantity and success of the comic magazines. They were pretty crude in the early days, but they seemed to him to have tremendous possibilities." So Perkins took a swing at comics scripting. By night, he pounded them out. He originality caught the attention of various editors, who began buying everything he could turn out. Quickly, he was selling to Superman and *Detective Comics*. He claimed to have sold hundreds of scripts without a single rejection. It was an education in writing.

"The search for novel and different plot angles is endless," Perkins said. "And in the searching, a writer automatically learns a vast amount about plotting. For instance, although I was a pulp magazine editor and read many thousands of scripts, and although I could judge where plots lived and where they died, I was never much of a hand at creating plots myself until I started to write comic scripts.

"My plotting ability continually improved as a comic writer. And later, when I came to edit comic magazines as a full-time

IT HAS JUST OCCURRED TO ME, SIR BUTCH, THAT IF MERLIN CANNOT CORRECT HIS MISTAKE, WE MUST REMAIN HERE FOR THE REST OF OUR LIVES!
I'VE BEEN THINKING THE SAME THING, SIR J... ER... I WOULDN'T MIND THAT IN THE LEAST!

OPPOSITE and ABOVE: Perkins was an early scripter on the Shining Knight, who debuted in Adventure Comics in 1941. Art: Frank Frazetta colors: Anthony Tollin.

job, I found that the faculty for dreaming up all kinds of ideas and angles grew even greater, and continues to grow."

At DC, Perkins wrote unidentified Superman and Batman stories. He was an early scripter on the Shining Knight, who debuted in *Adventure Comics* in 1941. Most 1942 Shining Knights are by an unidentified author, and it's tempting to speculate from Perkins' British background that he originated the character, a knight of old who wound up in modern times, fighting evil armed with a sword and golden armor given to him by Merlin the Magician.

Perkins made a big splash at Street & Smith when he came up with an idea that enabled S&S to get their new title, *Pioneer Picture Stories*, into Canada. Wartime restrictions on magazine imports were stringent. US comic books and pulps were banned outright. But there were loopholes. Perkins developed a lead feature around Britain's famous Legless Ace, Douglas Bader. For this, he recruited another English expatriate, artist Jon Small. The UK connection was enough to turn the trick with Canadian officials.

As the *Journal* reported, "The 'Legless Ace' was so successful that the magazine, *Pioneer Picture Stories*, was not only admitted to Canada, a feat in itself, but sold out every copy of the first issue in that country. He received an exceptionally

***Master Comics* #30 (Fawcett, Sep 1942).**

BULLETMAN
5
I'VE WAITING FOR ANOTHER BUGLE?... THE BLACK RAT?
WAIT SO LONG! I'M HERE!
I'VE CALLED YOU TO MEET ME IN A DESERTED CHURCH! THE BLACK RAT IS DEAD! I'VE ARRANGED FOR A PROPHET!
ALAS, VERY BAD PROPHET, I FEAR!
STOP, FOOLISH INSTRUCTIONS! I'VE THE BLACK RAT!
IT WAS MY IDEA! I'M THE LOGICAL LEADER!
CARRION, YOU SHOULD'VE BEEN SAVING YOUR CASH!
YOU'RE FORGOTTEN ME!
WHY ARE WE QUARRELING WHEN WE SHOULD BE PLANNING OUR PROPHET'S VOTE? WHERE'S HE?
HERE SOUL WAITS FOR CHRIST—OR SOMEONE! SOON CHRIST!
WHEN SOUL WAITS FIRST COMMAND! NEXT HONEST! NEXT COMMAND! LOYALTY! THEN!
THROW THE DICE, MURDER!
WHERE DID I MAKE MY TYPO? ARE THEY ALL OUT TONIGHT?
AH, EIGHT!
I TRY, I WIN!

ABOVE and OPPOSITE: The Weeper, AKA Mortimer Gloom, debuted in *Master Comics* #23 (Feb 1942). He was a Bulletman foe.

high rate for the 'Legless Ace' scripts, and continued to write them until he joined the Fawcett staff." The Legless Ace stories ran from issue #1 (Dec 1941) to #8 (Sep 1943).

According to the *Journal*, Perkins broke into Fawcett through a new villain. "He got his entree to Fawcett by thinking up a villain who has reappeared at intervals ever since, 'The Weeper,' a character who is convinced that life is sad and that it's criminal for people to be happy. He wrote continuously for the Fawcett comics magazines until joining their staff as an editor."

The Weeper, AKA Mortimer Gloom, debuted in *Master Comics* #23 (Feb 1942). He was a Bulletman foe. Seven months later, *Master* #30 ran "The Return of the Weeper." He also appeared in *Bulletman* #7 and #10. After his death, The Weeper's son took over in Mary Marvel Comics #8, teaming up with what may be another Perkins creation, Dr. Riddle. At one point, he teamed up with the Black Rat and the Murder Prophet as a member of the Revenge Syndicate. Perkins seems to have joined the Fawcett staff not long after writing this story, before France Herron left in March 1942 and was ultimately replaced by freelance scripter Rod Reed.

One of the largest comic houses of the '40s, Fawcett was a wartime boomtown. It was also spearheading a new

BULLETMAN
7
THERE ARE VISITORS THE MANSION.....
THERE'S OUR DESTINATION! OH, HOW BAD THIS WILL BE!
CUT IT OUT, AL, DO THE BROADCASTING OF IT AND DESCRIBE!
AND THE HEROES DROP ON THE MOBSTER PRONTO! CHOOSE!
ALAS, ALACK! HOW UNUTTERABLY WOEFUL!
BRACE UP, BUCK! WHAT'S THE TROUBLE?
OH, OFFICER MY HEART IS BREAKING FOR I'M LOSING MY MONEY!
NONSENSE! HI-YI! LET'S GO!
GOOD WORK, HEROES! NOW—
WHAT'S GOING ON HERE? A HOLD-UP?
A HOLIDAY! RIGHT BACK ON THE CASE! SUDDEN LIKE!
ONLY ONE OF THEM HAS WEAPONS AND LOOKS VERY ALIVE! LET'S RUSH HIM!
NO, HAVE A WEAPON, TOO! TAY ACTING AND LOOKS VERY RUSH.

approach to comics. "For a long time," the *Journal* reported, "the most successful comic magazines presented dramas that were essentially grim and horrific. *Captain Marvel* was the pioneer of humorous and human stories. Here, for practically the first time, were tales where the 'characters' had *character*—where they gave at least the illusion of reality. The consequence is that *Captain Marvel* is one of the best-selling comic magazines in the field. Every story is novel and different; the reader never knows what to expect. And the hero himself is often made fun of!"

Perkins explained the old method in a way familiar to Golden Age collectors the world over. "There was a time, he reflects—and it was new and novel at first—when the most effective comics consisted of three sequences, formula stories. There would be some villain who, perhaps, took on the attributes of some animal. Followed a fight, in which the hero would get some clue, follow it up, fight and get captured. The villain would then boast of his next coup, go off and carry it out. The hero would make a clever escape, pursue the villain, who had already courteously tipped him off, and beat him up in the final fight sequence. This kind of story is now definitely out, Perkins says emphatically."

Contrasting with this, according to Perkins, is a trend to make comic books truly comic. Hence the article's title.

As an example, the *Journal* recounted: "To get a really

***Bulletman* #7 (Fawcett, Sep 16, 1942).**

***Bulletman* #8 (Fawcett, Oct 16, 1942).**

different menace, Perkins recently suggested to one of the Fawcett writers that he build a story around a Jap villain who had everything that the corny and conventional Jap has—including buck teeth, heavy spectacles, and the like. But in the story, this villain complains bitterly that he is a corny cartoon. He doesn't like being a corny Jap villain—

***Captain Marvel Adventures* #27 (Fawcett, Sep 1943).**

***Captain Marvel Adventures* #27 (Fawcett, Dec 1943).**

and does everything he can to alter his appearance and acquire Western ways."

This doesn't seem to be Nippo the Nipponese, who first fought Captain Marvel in *Captain Marvel Adventures* #9, returning several times, once as a member of the Monster Society of Evil. He might mean one of the others Japanese members of that infamous group, Hashi or Smashi or Peeyu, who debuted in *Captain Marvel Adventures* #27 (Nov 1943).

From there Henry Perkins describes his recipe—really the Fawcett Group's recipe—for scripting exciting comic book stories. "To write comics," he declares, "you need a certain piece of creative mechanism which is lacking from the minds of most writers. That piece of mental mechanism is visualization. For while most writers see pictures then they write—*they do not write the stories in terms of pictures*. "They don't do this because they don't have to. Their skill in handling picture words conjures up for the reader the necessary pictures. A pulp writer's story comes out in the magazine essentially as he wrote it on his typewriter. But a comic script is not published—any more than a moviegoer pays to see a scenario.

"Essentially," continues Perkins, "a really effective picture-fiction scenario is produced by a writer who has conjured up a really thrilling and very pictorial mental movie—then cut it up into the most dramatic stills. With the story cut up into stills, the author then describes each still for the artist, adds the appropriate dialogue and captions where these are called for. As a matter of fact, the similarities between comics writing and movie writing are amazing! For writing comics scripts is the closest thing to writing a movie script outside the movies. Neither technique is, essentially, writing. It's devising. Both demand co-operation with, and knowledge of, other skills and minds. The movie writer must have an understanding of actors, directors and camera techniques. The comic script writer must understand the possibilities and the limitations of the artist who is going to 'produce' his script.

"First of all," explains Perkins, "the story must be very simple, and be pictorially conceived. In other words, the basic plot idea must lead to pictorial sequences when the script gets to the stage of being drawn up. The usual pulp plot is of no use whatever." At this point in the interview, Henry Perkins starts recounting intriguing specifics.

"For instance, among the many basic plot ideas which I've dreamt up and then passed on to writers was the notion that it'd make swell pictures and a novel story if surrealist pictures were brought into play. "Accordingly, the writer and I cooked up a yarn where poltergeists get into a surrealistic picture exhibit and animate the artist's nightmare. Amazing and convincingly realistic sub-characters were injected and an amazingly novel and very pictorial story was the result."

Claiming that anything went on comics, Perkins took credit for ideas as diverse as bringing Dillinger, Two-Gun Crowley and other dead gangsters back to life for a new crime spree in a Mr. Scarlet story in *Wow* #8 called "The Gangsters from the Grave," and a tale involving Captain Marvel as a modern version of Robinson Crusoe and ancient flying machines. "The Modern Robinson Crusoe" appeared in *Captain Marvel Adventures*, #30 (Dec 1943).

A reference to having come up with storylines involving "phantom madmen" and "ancient dictators" suggests Perkins created Stinky Printwhistle, who becomes IBAC, the villain who combines the worst attributes of Ivan

***Captain Marvel Adventures* #8 (Fawcett, Mar 6, 194**

America's Greatest Comics #7 (Fawcett, Spring 1943).

the Terrible, Cesare Borgia, Attila the Hun, and Caligula. "Captain Marvel and the Curse of IBAC" debuted in *Captain Marvel Adventures* #8. John Broome is said to have written the story.

But Perkins wasn't done. Again and again, he called up story after story, offering a rare picture of a Golden Age comic book editor at work transforming the still-young medium.

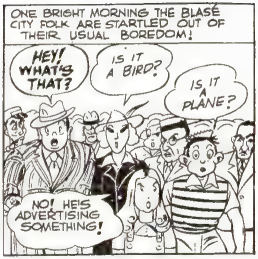
"Again, I thought up a story for *Captain Marvel*, about the world of the imminent and foreseeable future. The gadgets, inventions and miracles of this amazing world that most of us will see, and which certainly all children will live in and enjoy, turned into a very glamorous, very graphic story. It was titled, 'The World of Your Tomorrow.'" This tale ran in *America's Greatest Comics* #7 (Spring 1943). It was also notable for a panel where a group of people copy the Superman radio opening, saying "Is it a bird?" "Is it a plane?" Fawcett executives, under legal pressure from DC Comics, forbade any future references to Superman, even joking ones.

"Or take the character story," Perkins said. "An example of this is a story I wrote out for Lance O'Casey, a roving, swashbuckling, happy-go-lucky type of adventuring hero. A pirate tale always makes good pictures, but the theme is worn out and hackneyed. Most pirates are blood-thirsty monsters. So I thought up 'The Pirate Who Hated Blood.'" It made a very entertaining and novel yarn."

"The Pirate Who Hated Blood" ran in *All Hero Comics* #1 (Mar 1943). "In line with this new trend," says Perkins, "I have revamped a number of our characters. Mr. Scarlet formerly had the alter ego of Brian Butler, district attorney. He was dull and lifeless. So I had him fired; indignant citizens complained that Scarlet was doing all the work. Now Brian is a struggling lawyer, never has any dough, is always hungry. Mr. Scarlet is now a character. The reader feels sympathetic—begins to like him. Mr. Scarlet on one occasion even hocked his uniform to get some cash!" Entitled, "Make-Believe Mastermind," this story appeared in *Wow Comics* #9 (Jan 1943).

"Another hero, a youthful aviator called Phantom Eagle, always seemed rather static and lifeless. So after discussions with the author, the idea was evolved that the Phantom Eagle should crash and lose his nerve. His girl friend, an inventor, gives him back his lost confidence by convincing him that if he wears a certain helmet he'll be okay." This change occurred in "Has the Phantom Eagle Lost His Nerve?" *Wow* #14 (Jun 1943).

"These little touches give life and depth to a hero," summarized Perkins. "They're equally effective when applied to a villain. Or to sub-characters. The author who is able to add this 'extra something' not only ensures a virtual monopoly on the particular strip concerned; he is also giving himself the finest plotting practice in the world."


ONE BRIGHT MORNING THE BLASÉ CITY FOLK ARE STARTLED OUT OF THEIR USUAL BOREDOM!
HEY! WHAT'S THAT?
IS IT A BIRD?
IS IT A PLANE?
NO! HE'S ADVERTISING SOMETHING!

In the tale "World of Your Tomorrow" from *America's Greatest Comics* #7 (Spring 1943) was notable for a panel where a group of people copy the Superman radio opening, saying "Is it a bird?" "Is it a plane?" Fawcett executives, under legal pressure from DC Comics, forbade any future references to Superman, even joking ones.

It's clear that Henry Perkins was a breath of fresh air blowing through the Fawcett offices. In revamping clichéd characters, he sounds very much like Marvel's Stan Lee, circa 1961. If not for the fact that he soon departed Fawcett's halls, Perkins might have ascended to editorial prominence and gone on to make a larger impact on the field. At the time of this interview, Fawcett Comics was at its height. Mary Marvel had just been introduced; *Captain Marvel Adventures* was shifting to twice-a-month frequency, having started outselling former industry leader, Superman; the famous "Monster Society of Evil" serial was in its early chapters—Fawcett was the top of the comics heap for 1943.

Fawcett was also a hungry market. Via the article, Perkins was trolling for fresh talent. In 1943, good scripters were scarce. Many had gone off to war. And here he makes his pitch. "The comics script-writer, then, is never faced with the gloomy prospect of finished and

ALL HERO COMICS
NO. 1
MARCH 19
BY FAWCETT PUBLICATIONS 15 CENTS
GALS, IT'S TOPS! HERE ARE TWO PAIRS OF BRAND NEW ACTION WITH YOUR FAVORITE COMICS HEROES STARRING CAPT. MARVEL JR.
COME ON IN AND JOIN THE FUN !
LANCE O'CASEY
GOLDEN ARROW
ONE HUNDRED PAGES . . . ACTION! THRILLS! PICTURES!

***All Hero Comics #1* (Fawcett, Mar 1943).**

C.C. Beck's cover recreation of the cover for *Captain Marvel Adventures* #14.

effective work being rejected—the pulp writer's greatest dread," Perkins points out. "Of all the magazines in this tremendous field, the Fawcett Comics Group offers the highest rate of pay—the minimum is three dollars a page, and prices go up from there. Writers can, and frequently do, make up to two hundred dollars a week. Fawcett offers, too, the most cooperation and the finest opportunities for writers.

"Anything goes in comics," Perkins is quoted as saying, "provided the idea is simple and cannot only be told in pictures—but will *make pictures*!" As an example of what was needed, the article is illustrated by a page from an unidentified issue of *Wow* showing Mr. Scarlet outwitting Lhoba and his Taureg henchmen.

Few recall Henry Perkins today. But there are some. Captain Marvel artist Marc Swayze is one. He worked with him until Swayze was drafted at the close of 1942.

"I do recall him very well. I worked with him rather closely in '41 and '42. We were both members of the comic staff. I was with the art department at the same time Henry Perkins was a respected member of the comic book editorial staff. He was a typical editor there. I don't know a whole lot about him."

Like Schwartz, Swayze remembers a tall slender young man with a pronounced British accent. Swayze's chief recollections were of Perkins taking part in the Fawcett staff softball games played against the Jack Binder Shop crew. It was Henry Perkins who dubbed Binder "Backside Binder the Bushman," for the artists' stubborn propensity of submitting work showing characters seen from the back or behind bushes—all tactics designed to speed up art-shop production at the expense of good storytelling.

"I understand that later he was called Lynn Perkins," Swayze adds. "I never heard him called Lynn while I was there. We all called him Henry. I believe he was there towards the end of '41, well before John Beardsly and Otto Binder went in as interim editors. That would put him under Ed Herron."

Because the scripts he worked from often lacked any author name, Swayze can't say which Captain Marvel stories he might have drawn from Perkins' scripts, but he does recall this: "I remember illustrating one. The title was 'Henry's Grandmother.' If I'm not mistaken, I wrote the story, and named it after Henry Perkins. He's not in the story or anything like that. It was a takeoff on 'Charlie's Aunt.'" *Captain Marvel Adventures* #14 (Aug 1942) featured that tale, which was a farce in which Captain Marvel played the title character in a stage play, wearing a flowered dress and white wig, as part of a plot to foil Nazi saboteurs.

One anecdote sticks in Swayze's mind. "He was a rather high-key fellow. I guess anything he did he went at enthusiastically. I can tell you a funny story. And the joke was on Henry. I believe the perpetrator was fellow artist Pete Costanza. We used to order lunch sent up from the Walgreen's on the first floor of the Paramount Building. Henry had ordered a sandwich for lunch. When it was delivered, Henry was in the bathroom or some place, and Pete opened his sandwich up. By the time he and his buddies got through, they fixed that sandwich up until it was the most terrible and disgusting thing, with rubber cement and various colors and this, that and the other. So when Henry got back—I don't know whether he took a bite or what caused him to open up the sandwich—he was infuriated. He called the eatery and he had big words with the manager. I don't know how far it went. I think the manager was going to come up and take him apart. I know Henry was not going to go down and take the manager apart, because he wasn't that type. But it was a very funny thing. It was wartime. We were looking for something to laugh at."

Perkins scripted the 1945 serial *The Purple Monster Strikes.*

Rod Reed, under whom he worked after Ed Herron left Fawcett, said this about Perkins: "Lynn was a Fawcett editor. His whole name was Henry Avelyn Perkins. We called him Henry, but his pals outside the office called him Lynn. He was a dedicated student of the comics business with a keen sense of story and art." Reed once recalled Perkins luring seminal Batman writer Bill Finger over to do a little moonlighting at Fawcett. While Finger only wrote one Captain Marvel story, it was considered a coup to get him.

Not everyone who worked with Perkins recalled him with equal fondness. Writer Joe Millard derided him as "a British-born character with all the rollicking sense of humor of an icicle display."

Perkins was often the butt of jokes, according to Millard: "Rod used to drive Henry nuts when Henry would try to phone the drug store in the building to send up his lunch. Rod would get the calls diverted to his phone and used a combination of deliberate misunderstanding and inspired double-talk to drive Henry up the walls and halfway to the funny farm."

The late Captain Marvel scripter William Woolfolk also offered a frank and unflattering opinion: "As a person he set my teeth on edge. He was tallish, blondish, slenderish and snobbish. Everyone made secret fun of him. I remember him saying about Otto Binder, 'The world is getting much too full of small, dark round people.' He was all pose and attitude."

Superman and Batman scripter Alvin Schwartz had contact with him on two levels. "I knew Perkins personally before I ever worked for him," recalled Schwartz. "I met him at the home of another Englishman, the comics artist, Jack Small. About Henry—he was tall, thin, freckled and a true product of the British 'public school' system. What did I work with Perkins on? Captain Marvel—and only Marvel. I did several with him. As an editor—the best I can say, he was quirky. I don't know how he ever got the job. I didn't get along too well with Perkins who had very definite ideas about what he wanted—probably reflecting the insecurity he felt as an editor. He didn't last too long at Fawcett himself." Perkins seems to have departed the company in 1943. Will Lieberson took over from editor Rod Reed in June 1943, just months after the *Writer's Journal* interview was printed. It's been said that Perkins was relieved of his editorial duties to help prepare Fawcett's defense in the Superman plagiarism suit initiated by DC comics. He may never have resumed them.

One could speculate that since a succession of freelancers were promoted to the top spot over him; Perkins decided he had no long-term future at Fawcett. Or just as likely, he finally realized how some of his fellow staffers truly felt about him.

But Perkins didn't leave comics behind. Jumping over to Timely, he simply switched officers, writing Captain America for two years. Or so the legend goes. This account remains unsubstantiated.

Perkins scripted the 1945 serial *King of the Forest Rangers.*

After that, the trail gets murky. DC editor Jack Schiff, who remembered him as Lynn, recalled that he went to Hollywood. That much is verifiable. A Lynn Perkins co-scripted four Republic serials, 1945's *Purple Monster Strikes*, then *Daughter of Don Q*, *King of the Forest Rangers* and *The Phantom Rider* in 1946. His Republic period is said to have encompassed 1944-50.

Nor was he forgotten at Fawcett. In *Captain Marvel Adventures* #63 (Jul 1946), the Big Red Cheese fought a villain named…Henry Perkins!

"Eventually," noted William Woolfolk, "I heard that he later found a niche as a salesman for Rolls Royce automobiles, which suited him much better than being an editor of comic books."

The last known of Perkins is a stint in public relations in the 1970s, which is how DC editor Mort Weisinger remembered him. Whether he is still living today or not is undiscovered. But Perkins seems to have finally settled down to using Lynn as his preferred professional name.

Like a lot of early comic book people, Lynn Perkins recognized the immense potential of the exciting new medium. This is how he closed out his 1943 interview:

"Writing for the comics guarantees economic security and a greatly increased income, and work that is forever fresh and fascinating. Comics offer, also, to the ambitious writer, a chance to grow creatively—and to gain a working preview of the future.

"For, with the promise of television and other miracles of amusement, comics are truly the shape of things to come in publishing and entertainment!"

The limited hard cover edition of **The Complete Bone**, which premiered at the 2004 San Diego con, is known as "The Bone Bible" due to its uncanny resemblance to some popular editions of that Holy Book—which is only natural, since it took a printer specializing in Bibles to produce this gorgeous edition of Smith's magnum opus.

Never let it be said that Jeff Smith isn't a man of determination—and his word.

In the early 1990s, he set out to write and draw every panel on every page of a massive graphic novel called Bone. *In essence,* Bone *is a fantasy detailing the adventures of a trio of creatures known as Bones—cousins Fone, Phoney and Smiley Bone—who stumble upon a hidden valley filled with a rich mélange of humans, insects and animals of the magical, the mythical and the mundane variety. The cousins soon find themselves marooned in this strange new land, and inevitably become embroiled in affairs concerning the heart, the hearth and the body politic, before eventually finding themselves and their newly-found friends at the center of an all-out war between the forces of light and darkness, with the fate of the world as the prize. Pretty heavy and heady stuff, all in all. Still, that description, however much it represents a fairly accurate and detailed outline of the book's main storyline, fails to note uncounted significant events and telling twists of both character and plot. It also leaves out mention of some truly sublime moments of just breathtaking beauty—such as the first moment Fone glimpses Thorn—while it ignores Smith's considerable comedic gifts for crafting short bursts of gut-busting hilarity as well as longer, more sustained sequences which encompass entire issues. And there are still more pleasures—visual, emotional and visceral; sour, sweet and otherwise—which are revealed by even the most cursory reading of* Bone…

Many, many *more.*

The combination of Jeff Smith's straightforward-yet-subtle handling of character and plot, coupled with his flowing, expressive line work, spot-on blacks, and rock steady storytelling—oh, and that decade-plus of dedicated work—has resulted in a highly complex, entirely engrossing and paradoxically easily-read one-thousand-plus page epic graphic novel which has proven that it can be read and enjoyed repeatedly *by people of all ages, classes, philosophies, genders, and nationalities. Today, having garnered glowing critical notices as well as numerous well-deserved awards both at home and abroad,* Bone *commands a literal army of fans who defy categorization in everything but their love for Jeff Smith's unique take on…*

The Inhuman Comedy

Jeff Smith on the end of "Bone," what it means, and what comes after

conducted by Bill Baker

[Note: As will become quickly apparent, this interview took place just before Smith finished *Bone*.]

Bill Baker: How would you describe *Bone*, both the book and the epic undertaking it's been for you?

Jeff Smith: Well, Bone was my attempt at long form comic storytelling, in a way I had *always* wanted to see since I read my first Uncle Scrooge comic, or my first Pogo comic. And I just didn't see it anywhere. I mean a really long comic, like it's one story from page one to page thirteen-hundred.

As far as the story goes, it's the story

of three cousins who get lost in a fantastic valley filled with dragons and monsters and princesses. And they spend a year there, trying to get home. There's a lot that happens in that one year, but, basically, that's it: The three Bone cousins spend a year in a fantasy land.

What do you think? Does that explain it sufficiently?

Baker: Yeah, I think so. Well, as much as a statement like "A small group of unlikely allies work their way behind enemy lines to destroy the ultimate weapon" fully describes *The Lord of the Rings*, [laughter] but it's about as good a short, one line capsulization of *Bone* as I've heard yet.

Still, your simple statement that it's your "attempt at long form comic storytelling" really doesn't even begin to hint at the amount of work or the length of time that you've committed to completing *Bone*. After all, this is something that you began working on while you were in college, right?

Smith: Oh yeah. I started this in 1982. I came up with the characters and the settings, added my desire to blend all my interests—like *The Lord of the Rings*, and *Krazy Kat*, and Bugs Bunny, and *Star Wars*—and I thought this would be something other people would like, too. [laughter] It was slow to catch on in college, but I did it as a daily strip there. Of course, it was doing it as a comic book that really launched it for me, that really made all the pieces come together and fit. What is that, 22 years? Yeah. Twenty-two years.

Baker: How did the story change over the years—especially as a result of that transition from daily strip to the comic book format? Did it get richer, more complex...or did you end up having to strip some of the detailing away?

Smith: The characters were all in place when I was doing them in college, so they just came into play right away. Like I said, I wanted to take elements from things like *Heavy Metal*, and elements from Bugs Bunny and Uncle Scrooge, and mix them together. And that was pretty simple, just to come up with the basic premise. But something was missing in the early days, back when I was working on it as a daily strip. And it wasn't until much later—ten years later—that what I realized what was missing was a *depth* to the world or a sense of mission for the Bones. And that's really what was needed to propel the story—and for you to *care* about the Bones. Sure you hope they get back home—but what do they have to *accomplish* to get back home?

So I began to read a lot of old stories, a lot of fables, and I began to pick up a *sense* of what makes you want to root for a character, what drives these worlds. And *that's* what I started to add into *Bone*. I added mystical overtones to

The single volume trade paperback of **Bone**, released under Smith's own imprint, Cartoon Books, in 2004, collects all of the epic adventures of those loveable Bone cousins under one cover and in its original black and white format for the first—and possibly last—time.

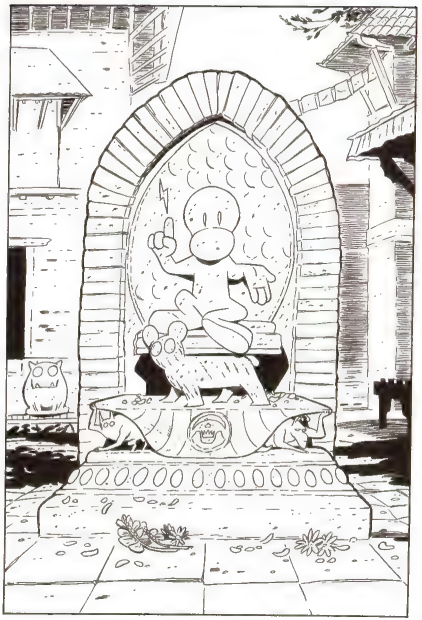
the people who live in the valley: What do they believe? What's their culture? And then, when different people from one part of the valley have different beliefs than people in another part of the valley, and then they come into conflict, suddenly you have an *event* happening that you can have the Bones get themselves caught in the middle of. And *that* suddenly became more interesting. The characters found themselves struggling more, and trying to help their friends…and just survive the general madness! [General laughter]

So *that* kind of conflict is really what was missing from my original concept, and what has now given this story so much life. [Short burst of self-deprecating laughter]

Baker: Some people have characterized *Bone*, both recently and in the past, as "just another funny animal book." What does that description leave out, and what does it ignore about the book, particularly in light of what we were just discussing?

Smith: There are people for whom there are *only* two kinds of comic books: super-hero and funny animal. And for those people, *Bone is* a funny animal book. There *are* animals in it that talk. There aren't that many—not all the animals talk. But I wouldn't call it a funny animal book.

I consider *Bone* a kind of a throw back, kind of an old school comic that goes back to the Golden Age of the comic strips. It's got more in common with *Thimble Theater*, or Tintin, or Asterix. Or Carl Barks Uncle Scrooge stories—although those are funny animal books! [General laughter] But I don't think people would consider *Calvin and Hobbes* a "funny animal strip."



TANEAL'S SCULPTURE, QUEEN'S SQUARE, ATHELA

This illustration from **Bone** Volume 9: Crown of Horns, the final of the separate trade paperbacks that collect Smith's tale, showcases the artist's ability to fuse his imaginary world with not just weight and presence, but also a startling yet soothing air of familiarity.

Anyway, *Bone* is an old school kind of comic that doesn't really fit in either of those two categories, funny animal or super-hero. It's just a comic, you know?

Baker: On a happier, vindicating note, you've been doing this as a comic for over a decade now, but the end's finally in sight, right?

Smith: Yeah. It's been twelve years and, as we speak, issue #52 should be on bookstore shelves this week. And #53 is on my desk, and I'm nearly finished inking it. So for me, there are just the two more issues and then I'm done, #54 and #55. Both 48 pages, so that's about a 100 pages left before the end of it. And I *am* excited, and I *am* ready for it to be finished, so it's going to be a lot of fun.

Baker: Are you feeling a bit of what they call "runner's high" at this point? [General laughter]

Smith: I think "runner's high" is a *great* way to describe it, because it *has* been a marathon. This is a very long time to keep a story this complicated in focus in your mind. And, here at the end, I *am* tired. It's been a long haul. It's been a lot of not just drawing comics, but a lot of getting out on the road to promote it, and dealing with all the politics, and dealing with all the business. All those things, and the ups and downs over twelve years, it's tiring. Even though a lot of times it couldn't have been better, it's still exhausting after 12 years! So, in that sense, it's a lot

like hitting the end of a marathon where you're just going…but when you can see that finish line, some miraculous source of energy just comes from nowhere, and I'm just feeling it. I'm going to sprint to the finish line.

Baker: Do you think you're going to miss working on *Bone* at all?

Smith: I do. I can't picture it yet. It's hard to figure….

But, on the other hand, I've really worked with these characters since 1984. So this is nearly 20 years of working with these characters. I feel a real sense of completion for their story, and I'm looking forward to sending this project to bed, and then starting the next one. I've got a couple projects that are pretty crystallized in my mind that are coming up, and I'm looking forward to doing different things.

Baker: Before we move on to those, I've got to ask you whether it's likely that you'll return to the world of *Bone* at some future time?

Smith: I have to say it's pretty unlikely. This, to me, is a single story. Just like *Moby Dick* or *Don Quixote*, I really don't picture a sequel to it. The world is still open, a little bit. I've worked on the back story of Gran'ma Ben as a young teenager with Charles Vess in *Rose*. That was a lot of fun, and we didn't tell Rose's entire story in that book. Charles and I both talk a lot about going back to *that* world and exploring it some more.

But that doesn't really include Bones, and it's not the same characters in a sense. Anyway, I really don't see going back to that. But I'm not saying I won't ever do it; I just don't want to give anybody false hopes. [General laughter]

Baker: How about other creators playing with your toys, so to speak? Is that a possibility?

Smith: You know, that doesn't really interest me that much. *Hellboy* has been kindled by people other than [series creator Mike] Mignola, and it seems to work really well for him. But I can't say I'm really too interested in doing that, just because, all of a sudden, I'd find myself in a supervisory role—which isn't something I'm too particularly interested in.

Baker: OK. Well, one final question on the subject of *Bone*: Is there any real possibility of going back and coloring the entire series, as you did with the beautiful 10th Anniversary edition of *Bone* #1, and re-releasing it in that form?

Smith: The plans are all still in the infant stage, because it's a *big*

All good things come to an end. The final separate black and white trade collecting the final chapters of Smith's long form comic story was released by Cartoon Books in 2004.

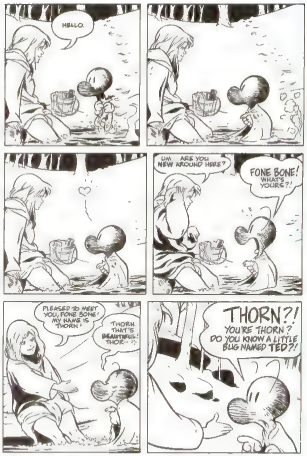
undertaking. [General laughter] I do want to go back and do a final sweep through all the books just because, after 12 years, there are some continuity errors, and there's some pictures that I just didn't have the time to draw right the first time—I would like to go back and fix those. So I would like to do a second edition, with a really tight proofing. Exactly how and when that'll happen, that's still in the planning stages. Whether it's in color or not, I'm not sure. But I will say that I do have a guy working right now, as we speak, coloring the books. [General laughter]

Baker: That'd be Steve Hamaker, right?

Smith: Yeah, Steve.

Baker: Excellent. I really think his coloring is amazing on your work.

Smith: Yeah, he's very good. And he is, as we speak, downstairs coloring *Bone* pages. That's because the Europeans have been asking us for five years to do a color version of the book, so, at the very least, we know we have *that* market to take care of. So, since we feel a little more secure being able to sell the color version first through the European market, we're going to go ahead and color them, and *then* explore how best to release them, and in what format. (Note: Scholastic Books announced during the 2004 San Diego convention that they will be publishing *Bone* in a series of full color hard cover and trade paperback editions, beginning Spring 2005. A one volume trade paperback collection of *The Complete Bone*, which reprints the entire saga in its original black and white tones, was originally released by Cartoon Books in August of 2004. As of press time, Cartoon Books central reported that they were nearly sold out of that edition's fourth printing. At present, there are no plans to reprint *Bone* in black and white when this version, and all remaining stock of the original separate black and white Cartoon Book volumes, are gone.)


HELLO.
UM. ARE YOU NEW AROUND HERE?
FONE BONE! WHAT'S YOURS?!
PLEASED TO MEET YOU, FONE BONE! MY NAME IS THORN!
THORN. THAT'S BEAUTIFUL, THORN!
THORN?! YOU'RE THORN.? DO YOU KNOW A LITTLE BUG NAMED TED?!

Bone does, indeed, have it all: Adventure. Comedy. Greed. Political Intrigue. War. And a very effective romantic interest and eye appeal in the form of Thorn, who proves to be full of surprises, and made as much of steel as sweetness before the tale's end.

Smith's rendition of everyone's favonte Big Red Cheese was featured on the 2003 DC Comics holiday card.

Baker: You mentioned some new projects that you're really looking forward to a bit earlier. Would that include the Captain Marvel project that DC announced at San Diego a while back?

Smith: Yes. I'm looking forward to that. That's a fairly short term project—especially when compared to *Bone*. That'll take, probably altogether, about a year. I've already put quite a bit of time into it. And then, after that, I've got a science fiction story that I'm *very* excited about; some good characters and some good concepts. That's also sort of a one shot deal for a graphic novel's worth of material. Those two projects are pretty solid in my mind, and I think I'm going to do them in that order: *Shazam*, and then this other project, called *Big Big*.

The **Rose** miniseries, collected in glorious full color trade and hard cover editions by Cartoon Books in 2002, effectively paired Jeff Smith's killer script with Charles Vess' incredible paint pages to produce a prequel to **Bone** that left readers clamoring for more.

And then, further than that? That's too far to plan, yet. I have a lot of ideas, and I have a lot of options.

Baker: So is working with DC, one of the major mainstream publishers in the market, a sign of things to come? Will they also be publishing *Big Big*, or will that be someone else?

Smith: No, I will be doing that myself.

Baker: So the DC stuff isn't a sign of any sort, then?

Smith: It's a sign of things to come in this way: I *seriously* doubt I will spend another 12 years on a single story. [General laughter] That was unusual. It was something that I really wanted to try, and I'm really happy I've done it, but I think it's much more likely that I will be doing 40 to 200 page stories from now on. That way I can go to different topics, and even different publishers, if I like. Obviously Captain Marvel belongs to DC, and that'll be done through DC, but *Big Big*, I'll be bringing that out through Cartoon Books. I just have to plan *now*.

Baker: What about Captain Marvel made it the project you wanted to do next?

Smith: A couple of things. Number one, DC called me. They knew I was getting towards the end of *Bone*, and wanted to know if I'd be interested in doing anything with them. Now, when the conversation *first* started—they didn't tell me which super-hero they wanted me to work on—I couldn't imagine what they were going to say, because in all honesty, I don't know that I would really be that interested in working on somebody like Superman, or Batman. But when they said, "Captain Marvel," I was surprised—and it just sounded right. Just right from the get-go, there was something about it that sounded *right*.

So I started to look into it, and the more I read about Captain Marvel—and I mostly looked at the Golden Age material—I thought that this character was much more than just your run-of-the-mill super-hero. Because he's not just some guy who breaks some villains' balls. There's a lot more to the concepts, and what's behind them, and a lot more to all the cast. He was a very simple, very primal super-hero. There's something about him that really stood out, and the more I read, the more I liked him.

Next, I called Mike Carlin at DC back, and I agreed that I'd like to do it, but with a couple of conditions. I wanted to write and draw it, and I didn't want to do a monthly book. I just wanted to do a single story, so we just used the *Kingdom Come*/*[Batman: The] Dark Knight Returns* model of four 48 page prestige format books. So, in the end, it ended up that I'm going to write and draw, letter and supervise the color—everything.

Baker: I've heard rumors that you're planning on using a fan-favorite epic story, which ran for something like twenty issues of the original Fawcett series, as the basic inspiration for your own take on the character. True?

Smith: That's right. Today, that's probably the best known Golden Age Captain Marvel story, "The Monster Society of Evil." It was serialized in the '40s for about 20 issues, and it was just Captain Marvel's battle with this Society of Monsters. [Laughter] It's a very fun story, but it does *not* hold up to today's standards; it's very convoluted, and it can't be done as is. In fact, what I proposed to DC, and they agreed to, is my project will pretty much just steal the title, and I'm going to go through and kind of modernize some of the characters and some of the ideas, and try to get them up to what I think, at least, modern readers will swallow and enjoy.

One of the reasons I took the name "Monster Society" was because I *did* want to say to comics people, through the use of the title, that *this* Captain Marvel is taking his cues from the Golden Age, from the early days of super-heroes. But, like I said, the story itself has almost nothing to do with the original serial.

Baker: Have you decided on any of the villains who'll be making up your Monster Society?

Smith: I definitely got some of the monsters from the old serial, like the alligator-headed guys—because they're *very* cool! [General laughter] They're a lot of fun. So, some of the monsters will be recognizable from the old series, and I've got a couple that are crazy new monsters that will be a lot of fun to work

The first volume of **Bone** introduced readers to the three titular cousins—Fone, Phoney and Smiley, respectively left to right—whose adventures in a strange, magical valley provide laughs and thrills galore in Jeff Smith's 1000 page-plus fantasy graphic novel.

with, but I don't want to say too much about that.

Mostly, I'm just having fun with the concepts of the magic order, and the idea that this small, defenseless child can—with his magic word—just transform himself into a super-hero. I'm having a good time with it. I think it's going to be a fun read.

Baker: Does working with someone else's characters challenge you in different ways, or allow you to stretch new graphic muscles, so to speak?

Smith: Well, I covered a lot of territory in *Bone* as far as topics go. It's got just about everything. I mean, it's got romance, politics, philosophy and slapstick comedy. I got a lot out of my system with *Bone*. But there are things in the super-hero genre that are different than in *Bone*. There are different rules to different genres. So, when I was looking into Captain Marvel, the two things that I wanted to figure out were "What are the rules of the genre?" and "What are the rules of the characters?" And so, as I read all these Captain Marvel stories, I began to see what rules surround the individuals, and what rules surround the super-hero genre.

And, yeah, I am finding new things to keep me interested, and it is different. And, again, one thing that's *very* different about this story, of course, is the length. Being forced to tell a concise story within 200 pages—that's definitely a different kind of discipline than I used with *Bone*, where I was allowed to ramble and really *explore* things in a much different way. In 200 pages, I've got to…. You've *really* got to know the story and set it up, and have your characters move right through it. So, yeah, there are definitely new challenges presented by this project. Color, for one.

Baker: This'll mark the first time you're working in color throughout an entire series. Do you think that's going to affect the way you create the art for the new book?

Smith: It definitely could if I let it, but I'm going to try not

Although the aptly-named Great Cow Race represents one of the comedic highlights—if the not the actual pinnacle of hilarity—of this family-friendly series, the cover of the second volume collecting that story arc provides ample evidence of the coming storm of evil which will soon envelop our heroes and their new friends.

to let it have one. When I draw *Bone*, I'm intending for it to be seen in black and white, and it's more work that way. You have to put blacks in to do more than just "color" things in black. Sometimes you have to use black to express distance—or the exact opposite. Sometimes I use black to express when something's extremely up close to you. Basically, there's an art to how you lay the blacks down on the page of a black and white comic book. And if you're doing it in color, sometimes you don't need the black so much, because you can use color to differentiate distances, or one object from another.

In some ways, it could be a little bit easier for me as far as the inking goes. But then, you know, you have to go ahead and color it. So I imagine it will work out to be about the same amount of work. But I did decide that I think I should try to draw it as if it's going to be in black and white, because I think it'll be that much stronger when you color it that way. There'll be a couple of exceptions, like a night sky. In the color version, I'll probably do that in color. So, instead of black with white dots, which is what we use in *Bone*, in Captain Marvel it'll be baby blue with different colors of stars, in white and various shades of blue.

Baker: So you're enjoying all aspects of the gig, and working with DC itself, a lot, then?

Smith: Oh, yeah. And as far as working with DC goes, that hasn't been too bad. The editor I'm working with, Mike Carlin, has been *extremely* fun to work with. He's been really helpful, and been real open-minded to my ideas. I haven't encountered any "You're stepping outside of continuity!" or "You're doing something wrong!" moments. I've only encountered open-mindedness, discussion, and a couple places where I was like "I've got a really good idea, Mike! I'm right on the edge of it, if I could just figure out how to do this!" and then he'd throw out an idea that just fits *perfectly*. Now, I'm not sure if he's going to want to take any of the blame for some of it, but he's definitely been helpful in giving good ideas. I haven't had to debate about anything, so far.

Baker: Are there any other mainstream super-hero characters, be they living in the DC Universe or the House of Ideas, that you wouldn't mind tackling someday?

Smith: Uhm, not too much. [General laughter] As you alluded to before, it is someone else's character, and there isn't a lot of appeal for me working on somebody else's characters. But I think this will be fun, so I'll give it a shot.

HA! HA!
WHAT POWER! GLORIOUS FREEDOM!
AND I OWE IT ALL TO YOU, ROSE!
SOON THE MASTER AND I WILL ENSLAVE YOUR PEOPLE, AND THERE IS NOTHING YOU CAN DO ABOUT IT!
I CAN DO THIS!
CHUNK!

As this page from **Rose**, the prequel to Jeff Smith's Bone epic, clearly demonstrates, the lead has to overcome truly daunting obstacles, and face up to some truly terrible challenges—and foes.

Every action has a consequence in real life, and those same actions take on greater weight and added meaning in the fabulous world envisioned by Jeff Smith and Charles Vess in **Rose**.

About the only other character I have a little idea for in my head is for the old, fat yellow Iron Man. [General laughter] Remember him? I have a little story with him that I think would be fun. But that's it. I got nothing else.

Mostly, I give my head for science fiction stories, and some other "angst of life" stories that I want to tell. All of which are very different from Spider-Man and X-Men.

Baker: Speaking of science fiction, could you fill us in on some of the basics behind *Big Big*?

Smith: I'll try, but *Big Big* is not just my own project. Paul Pope is also involved, and it's a little "loosey-goosey," so I'll do my best. If you don't mind me getting too cheeky with the answers. [General laughter]

Baker: How'd it come about?

Smith: [After a short, almost stunned silence] How *did* it come about...? Geez, I don't remember!

Comic book projects, in my experience, take a couple of years to actually happen. From the time where you're sitting in a hotel bar at a convention with somebody, and somebody just says something, until the time you start really talking about it, and then you start really doing work on it, and then it finally comes out—it's at least a couple of years! At least, that's the way it's been going with *Big Big*, and now I honestly can't remember how it began.

But, at some point, obviously, Paul and I were discussing science fiction stories that we both had. And Paul does these beautiful oversized comics—one was called *Buzz Buzz*, another *THB Circus*—and they're these incredible, large black and white books that kind of remind me, size-wise, of the old art books you used to get when you were a kid that would tell you how to draw still lifes, or how to draw cartoons, or how to draw landscapes or whatever. And these books that Paul does are just designed from start to finish. He thinks about every element of the book, from the inside covers, to how the contents are arranged and presented, and I've always been fascinated by them. So he suggested that we do one together. He'll do his science fiction story, I'll do my science fiction story, and we'll publish it in one of these oversized books and call it *Big Big*. And we'll design it from start to finish. One of the ideas is that inside the front cover there might be newspaper articles from the science fiction world of the stories, or something like that. The actual characters and stuff, I feel really good about them—they're really strong concepts, but I don't want to talk about them at all.

Except they're gonna be cool! [General laughter]

Baker: What about science fiction piques your interest?

Smith: I like genre, OK? So whether it's humor, or fantasy, or science fiction, or super-heroes or whatever, I enjoy

genre. It's kind of fun to talk about life just a *little* skewed, if you know what I mean. It's not reality—but you can talk about reality. So I enjoy those things, and I enjoy discovering the rules within genre, and how it works. I think if I was a filmmaker, I would *have* to make a western. So that's what I mean by that.

So science fiction, to me, it's another genre—and it's one I'm interested in, because good science fiction usually has some nugget at the center of its story that really is an intellectual puzzle, a "What if?" Just like in Kurt Vonnegut's book *Cat's Cradle*, which asks "What if you had a molecule that could take all water and turn it into super hard plastic?" There's always some little nugget of an idea. And then, from that nugget, you just spin out the "What if?" and see how the characters and society react to them.

I think that's fun. And, like was done with *Star Trek*, you can layer it over today's society. And that's probably the point of that genre, really.

Baker: Yeah. It provides a fairly safe way to explore some important issues, ideas, and problems from something of an artistic distance.

Smith: Oh, that's kind of an antiseptic way of putting it, though. I don't think there's a *safe* way to do it; because that implies that you're afraid to talk about it, flat out. I think it's a more *interesting* way, because it's a.... You're *forced* to look at it that way. You let your guard down. One of the reasons I like genre—and one of the most perfect examples—is *Maus*. *Maus* is the book art Spiegelman did about his father who was a Holocaust survivor. Now, most people know this well by now, but for those who don't, the Jews are depicted as mice and the Nazis are cats in *Maus*. One of the reasons that works so well, when on the face of it it's kind of a ludicrous assumption—doing a talking animal comic about death camps—but the reason it works *so well* is because when you're reading it, and it's mice and it's cats, you kind of let your guard down. And if spiegelman had instead actually drawn his father, and the people he met, and the way they were treated in the death camps—*realistically*—well, that's a *different* experience for the reader than they're going to have if they're reading about mice and cats. But since the reader kind of let his guard down a little bit, the story is able to get past the reader's defenses and get to him.

And *that* is why I think genres can be interesting. Because they hold up a mirror that is just a little off center, just a little to the side, and instead of showing you *exactly* what you are, it allows you to put a cowboy hat on, or a space helmet, or even a Spider-Man mask, and show you society with just enough of a slant that it's acceptable to you to look at it, and to explore it.

Which is another way of saying it's a safe way to do social criticism, so there you go. [More laughter]

Baker: There's one question that I haven't seen anyone ask you yet, but which seems inevitable considering your solid background as an independent comics creator, but do you see taking on mainstream, work for hire assignments as a betrayal of your roots?

Smith: It would be if I didn't go back. I mean, if I just started penciling *The Hulk* every month for Marvel, yeah, I would say that was kind of giving up on something that I made *sure* everyone knew I felt strongly about. But just doing a project? No. It's not as if I sold the rights to *Bone* to DC so I could do this. I still own *Bone*. I'm not going to own Captain Marvel...but then I'm just going to do 200 pages with him. And then I'll do *Big Big*, and I have other creator-owned stories of my own to do after that. So I don't see that as the case at all.

If I sold *Bone* tomorrow, and they could take it and have anybody draw it, *that* would be betraying my roots. But just having fun and doing different projects? I don't see that as a betrayal, at all.

Baker: And you're also going into it with eyes wide open, too.

JEFF SMITH & CHARLES VESS

Charles Vess provided pages that weren't just pretty for the **Rose** miniseries he did with Jeff Smith; they also demonstrate the artist's steady hand at storytelling, crystal clear layout, and delineating dynamic figures, among other delights.

Rare CD-Rom of Voyager's **The Complete Maus**, released in 1994.

Smith:
Yeah. I mean, I'm going to work on this project the same way I would on *Bone*. I'm not going to—let's use your word—"betray" my way of approaching comics, if you know what I mean. And I wouldn't.

DC called me, I called them back. They gave me plenty of time to think about the story, and I called them back and said, "Before we start negotiating," because that's a reality, "I want to tell you what my conditions are. If you don't like them, then I'm not going to do it, because I only want to do this thing if I can tell the story the way I tell stories." And then I told them my ideas, and then they agreed to everything, pretty much, and *then* we negotiated the terms. And so, obviously, they do own this book. There's no question that, if they want to, they can take the whole thing and throw it in the trashcan.

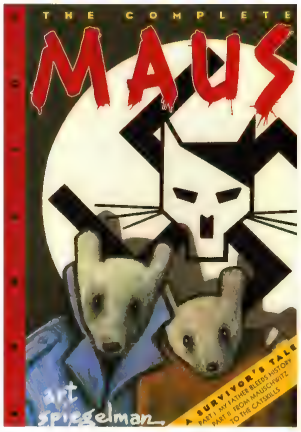
But I didn't sign my life away, you know? And if they do, well, I still get paid, for one thing. [General laughter] Also, I'm exploring these characters my way; I'm writing them in the same fashion as always. I'm doing scripts the way I do for *Bone*—with little thumbnail sketches. I *do* send them to them for their approval, because it is their character. And, so far, I think they're having as much fun working with me as I am with them, so it's been good. And I'm not changing the way I draw comics, and I'm not changing the way I think about them, artistically, in any way.

Baker: What do you hope your readers get out of your work, whether it's *Bone*, Captain Marvel, or any of your other projects?

Smith: Well, in any kind of artistic endeavor, there's some kind of exchange of ideas between the artist and the viewer, or the reader, and I do think that is what's going on. Some of it I touched on earlier. You're exploring characters and putting them into a situation and seeing how they break. And I think that's fun. You're giving the reader "What if?" situations, and you've got a lot of characters' lives, and a lot of emotions, on the line, and I think *that's* what's going on.

Ultimately, with Captain Marvel, and with *Bone*, I just want them to read it and forget that it's all just little boxes. I want them to just read it and get caught up in the story, and caught up in the characters, and *have* to go where the characters have to go.

I'm not sure why it's so much fun, but *that's* why I'm doing comics. It's that knowledge that I'm throwing some door open for the reader, and it's a downhill slope and he's got to go! [General laughter] I love that.



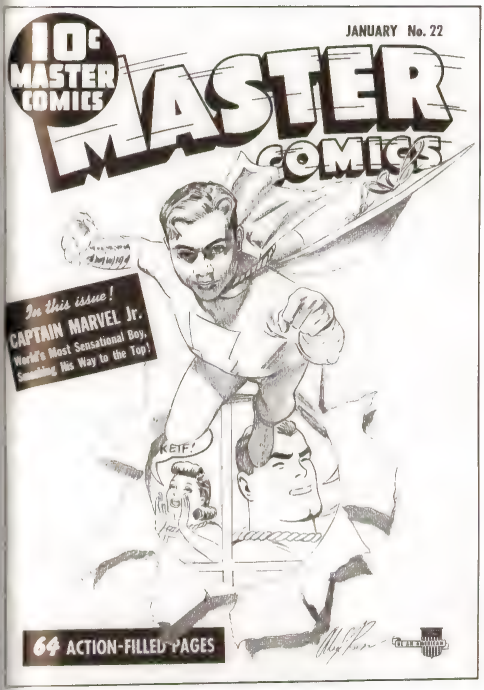
The cover of the surprisingly rare first edition of **The Complete Maus: A Survivor's Tale** by art spiegelman, originally released in CD-Rom format by Voyager in 1992.

Baker: Do you have a need to tell stories? I mean, aside from the whole working artist aspect of the job. I ask, because I've often gotten the sense when talking with you that you're a born storyteller.

Smith: Well, maybe, yeah. I do enjoy getting paid for it, though. [More laughter] That *is* nice.

But, yeah, there is something about the process of telling a story that I really enjoy. And specifically, in comics, I enjoy the challenges of trying to create movement, and a three dimensional world, when you're using static images that are trapped, kind of pinned to this two dimensional page. I know the best comics that I read when I was a kid did that for me—the panel borders would melt away, and the drawings seemed to move, almost as if my own imagination had triggered it into being a film inside my brain. I enjoy doing that. I enjoy figuring it out. I enjoy talking to people who read the story, and *do* get that. Because I see that. I see that all the time at shows. People read it, they read it with their kids, and I can just tell that they're getting it. And that's *so* much fun for me.

For more information on Jeff Smith, his art and various projects, head over to ***www.Boneville.com****, the virtual home of Fone and the rest of the cast of* Bone. *Those interested in the color editions planned by Scholastic should be able to find more on those volumes at the publisher's website,* ***www.scholasticbooks.com****.*



Mock-up **Master Comics** cover art by artist, Alex Ross showing Keif Fromm as Capt. Marvel Jr. bursting out from the comic book (1994). Being an admirer of the Golden Age of comics and Fawcett in particular, Alex Ross was kind enough to render this very special illustration for me at the 1994 Chicago Comic Convention after hours in the hotel sports bar. [I can still never thank you enough for this, Alex. -Most sincerely, Keif.]

Mac Raboy

[continued from page 25]

things were at their worst, I imitated my fictional hero with all of my mind, body and soul. I *was* Captain Marvel Junior!

I can recall as if it were just yesterday when I was but nine years old, the first time that I read Captain Marvel Junior's elusive origin trilogy in *Master Comics* #21, *Whiz Comics* #25, and the triumphant conclusion in *Master Comics* #22. The women were stunningly gorgeous. The men were ruggedly handsome. The villains were heinously evil. The backgrounds were riddled with atmosphere. And the action was suspenseful and non-stop in the telling of Captain Marvel Junior's origin.

The first part of Captain Marvel Junior's origin trilogy begins in *Master Comics* #21 (Dec 1941) and is illustrated by Mac Raboy. The tale begins by saying: "Introducing the scourge of Europe… The terror of the age… That one and only Captain Nazi! But close on his trail is Bulletman to see that the one-man blitz is a flop… And just to make sure of things, Mighty Captain Marvel sits in on the game to play his hand!"

As Hitler introduces Captain Nazi to his warlords, he shows him a diagram depicting Captain Marvel, Bulletman, Spy Smasher and Minute Man. Hitler roars, "These are your new opponents Captain Nazi! Your first job will be to rid America of those weaklings called heroes."

Captain Nazi begins by terrorizing a crowd; Bulletman and Captain Marvel get wind of this new threat and team up to thwart him. The finale shows Captain Marvel arriving just in time to take the impact of a bomb set to blow up the Brooklyn Navy Yard.

As the dust settles, Captain Marvel finds a note from Captain Nazi which says, "You'd better keep your snooping nose in *Whiz Comics*, Captain Marvel… Because I'm coming over there next month to beat your brains out! I'll get Bulletman later" – signed, Captain Nazi.

The second part of this feature continues in *Whiz Comics* #25 (Dec 1941) and is illustrated by C. C. Beck and Mac Raboy. The chronicle continues with Billy Batson addressing the reader and saying, "He's here folks! Smashing his way right out of *Master Comics* and into our own *Whiz*, Captain Nazi is cutting a path of sabotage and destruction across the country! Can nothing stop him?"

After Captain Marvel has several confrontations with Captain Nazi, each time resulting in Captain Nazi eluding him, we are introduced to the young Freddy Freeman and his grandfather. As they fish, they see the body of Captain Nazi floating in the water. After rescuing him, the evil agent of Hitler strikes and kills the elderly man and wrestles with

Freddy and watches as the boy falls into the bay to drown.

Captain Marvel, flying overhead, sights the boy and scoops him up. After taking Freddie to the hospital, Billy learns that the boy's back is broken and that if he lives, he will be crippled for life.

As the climax of one of the greatest origin stories in comic book history, Billy takes a desperate chance and carries the youngster through the ancient terminal (at the stroke of midnight) to visit the ghost of the wizard, Shazam! The ancient wise man asserts to Billy, "What has already come to pass cannot be changed by any power of mine." Shazam does explain to Billy that as Captain Marvel, he can pass on some of his mighty powers to the boy. When the helpless juvenile views Captain Marvel and speaks his name, a flash of lightning is seen and the boy says, "I'm all well again! I'm strong, I-I'm like you!" Captain Marvel exclaims, "That's right! You're Captain Marvel Junior!"

The third and final part of this great Golden Age epic is told in *Master Comics* #22 (Jan 1942) and is exclusively illustrated by Mac Raboy. It begins when a shriveled old man called Dr. Eternity peers at a list of ten names that he has slated for "the wax death," his way of displaying figures in his private museum.

Bulletman and Captain Marvel Junior work together to defeat Dr. Eternity, but Captain Nazi evades the clutches of justice once more. As Bulletman and Captain Marvel Junior bid each other farewell for now, the epic concludes with a final panel showing Captain Marvel Junior addressing the readers. He announces, "Hope you'll be on hand next month, fellas… I'm going to be in 'my own' exciting adventure strip!"

Only recently has the origin trilogy of Captain Marvel Junior received its much deserved and long awaited recognition. With *Master Comics* #21, one not only sees a heroic teaming of Captain Marvel and Bulletman, but the reader is also introduced to one of the Golden Age's most infamous and interesting villains—Captain Nazi. *Whiz Comics* #25 contains spectacular non-stop brawling between Captain Marvel and Captain Nazi, and introduced the first of many inductees into the Fawcett Marvel Family: Captain Marvel Junior. The climactic conclusion in *Master Comics* #22 depicts Bulletman and Captain Marvel Junior joining forces to outwit both Captain Nazi and the deranged anti-American, Dr. Eternity.

This is one of only a couple known existing images of Mac Raboy. This particular photo was featured in the very rare 1949 book, **Famous Artists & Writers of King Features Syndicate**. This book was limitedly distributed in-house through King Features to introduce the syndicate to its many talented artists and writers and the comic strips they worked on. The page details a little information on Raboy's life and career and at one point specifically states, "**Captain Marvel, Jr.** was his outstanding work with Fawcett, and after he got that super-thriller under way he left the company to do freelance advertising art. It was during this freelance period that he became the Art Director for **Spark Comics** [and worked on the **Green Lama**]. He signed with King Features Syndicate to take over the **Flash Gordon** [Sunday] page in the spring of 1948. At the time when this book was published, Raboy was 34 years old and was just beginning his second year (of a twenty year career) illustrating the **Flash Gordon** Sunday strip.

All three issues are examples of "Marvel-ous" plot and character development, panel art storytelling, and near perfect "linking" between issues. The superb artistry of Mac Raboy and C. C. Beck must be seen to be fully appreciated. These two comic giants, Mac Raboy in particular, gave life to characters that changed the course of comic book history. But whether you're a Fawcett fan or not, it's easy to see why these three comics are a classic and why Raboy's Captain Marvel Junior is such a memorable character to me.

It's a tragedy that we know so little about the late, great Mac Raboy. When he died in 1967, he literally left us on the cusp of an Organized Comic Fandom who would soon recognize and appreciate his gift to draw. Being that Raboy passed on just three years before I was born, this makes me lament his absence and even further mourn that I would never be able to thank him in person for the inspiration he instilled within me. I don't believe Captain Marvel Junior would have had the same affect on me if Mac Raboy hadn't been his artistic chronicler.

I owe a lot to Emanuel "Mac" Raboy. I owe him the mental and physical stability of my youth. I owe it to him, to two mighty words, and a glorious bolt of lightning!

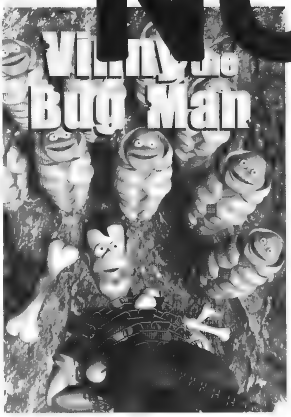
This article is dedicated to Joker creator Jerry Robinson and Mary Marvel creator Marc Swayze. The timeless tales of the Golden Age of Comics they have shared with me allows me to further appreciate these great artists and their peers even more. Their friendship I consider priceless. —KAF

Then and NOW

by **Tony C. Caputo**

When asked what NOW products I am most proud of, the answer depends on which iteration of the company you mean. If you include the production line material from the 1980s and 1990s, the list is too long to mention. But if you mean today's NOW Media Group Inc., or NOW Comics 3.0, which focuses on a philosophy of quality rather than quantity, our new products are really changing the way our company operates, and are all very exciting additions to the NOW repertoire. So today, the answer is that I am proud of all of them.

Ralph Snart Adventures Trade Paperback Volume I is a 432-page monolithic testament to the comic genius of Marc Hansen. It also includes my absolute favorite issue: *Ralph Snart Adventures Volume 2 (and 3) #4* entitled "*My Summer of Ill Repute.*" Some call it a satiric spin at Hunter Thompson's *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*. I don't really care, it's just *funny*. When you're having a bad day, pick up *Ralph Snart Adventures* and you'll see what I mean. I can still remember when I first started NOW and met Marc Hansen for the first time in my office at an ad agency. He showed me his portfolio of cartoons and comic art and I remember being astonished that he was never published before because I immediately saw something unique in his work. Yes, he wrote funny stuff, classic cartoon antics, underground nuances and even some slapstick, but I noticed that Marc also *draws* funny. The lines and shapes of the characters, the backgrounds, props and even action lines, words and word balloons all work together to spring the punch lines. Those who appreciate Hansen's animated artwork can enjoy his creations even more.



Page from **Vinny the Bug Man**, by CWS Studios and Chet Spiewak.

I made Marc Hansen a shareholder in today's NOW Media Group Inc. because of his contribution to NOW Comics, both in the past and present. Frankly, he deserves to be in this position (at this time, most of our products are his creations), but he's also a valuable asset to the Board. Hansen was around at the very beginning, always lending a helping hand. He's seen many of the decisions, both right and wrong, made by everyone involved with the company. In a time where it seems that many young business graduates can't understand the importance of actual cash flow over working capital, that experience of seeing a business's trials and triumphs is invaluable.

Hansen also self-published a title called *Weird Melvin*, now collected in two different trade paperbacks. The first collection reprints the comic book series, including the last, never-before-published issue, while the second book reprints the original comic strip that appeared in the *Comics Buyer's Guide*. *Weird Melvin* is about a boy who must decide between a life as a monster killer with his favorite comic book character, and life as an ordinary boy with his family. Hansen lets loose in this series, as he did in the original Eternity Comics' *Doctor Gorpon* mini-series. NOW has collected the three-issue adventures of the extreme monster killer in another Marc Hansen trade paperback, currently on its second printing.

Another project that makes me proud is Barry Daniel Petersen's *MirrorWalker*, which was first created in 1990, with only a single issue of the planned, two-issue mini-series published. This eye-popping 48-page

MirrorWalker, by Marv Wolfman, Barry Petersen and Erich Schrempp.

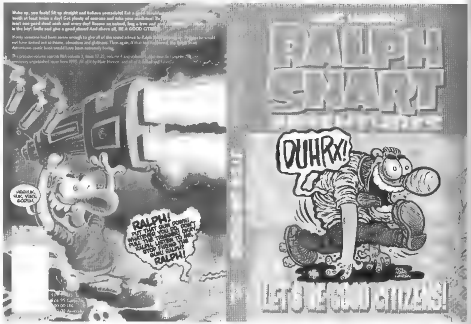
graphic novel is written by comic book veteran Marv Wolfman and illustrated by Petersen, with special effects photography provided by award-winning photographer Erich Schrempp. It follows NOW's innovative approach to graphic novels and trade paperbacks, creating a unique and exciting visual experience by seamlessly combining special effects digital photography and 2D animation.

The concept of animated characters within a photographic world goes back to the early part of the last century. The old "Tony the Tiger commercials," where a cartoon tiger picks up a real spoon or holds up a real box of cereal, brought the concept to the mainstream. A number of older Walt Disney films also contributed to this trend, including *Alice's Adventures in Cartoon Land*, as well as more recent films like *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*, *Space Jam* and *Looney Toons, Back in Action*. So, I am very excited to welcome this innovative project back into the NOW family.

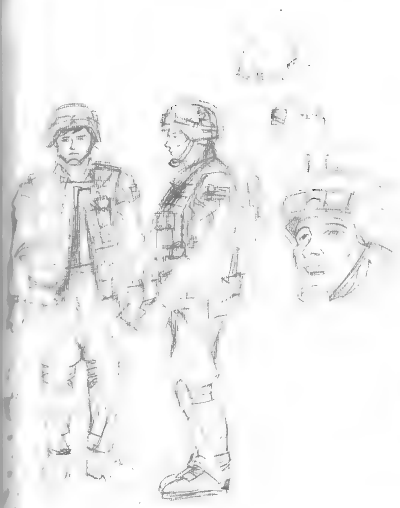
On the other hand, NOW's other full-color book is entitled *Vinny, the Bug Man*, a brand new multimedia package that includes a groundbreaking 128-page full color graphic novel and prepackaged CD-ROM with 3D computer-rendered animation for readers of all ages. People have asked me what makes this project so special, and I tell them that not only is it a great story, but it's also a bridge between interactive games and 3D animation and sequential art. This is a comic unlike anything ever before seen on the printed page. The original 3D animation is rendered specifically for print, with the same depth, realistic textures, mood and lighting that you'd find in other visual storytelling media. This is a "comic book" for the audience that doesn't read comics anymore—the youth of America. I'm also excited about this because it's the only new NOW title I feel comfortable in letting my eight-year-old read.

In this comic book adventure, Vinny is beginning to learn the bug extermination business from his Uncle Guy, but his very first extermination assignment happens to be at a government research facility. Armed with a high-tech bug blaster, he attempts to annihilate his enemies, the roaches, but

Ralph Snart Adventures Trade Paperback II – almost 300 more pages by Marc Hansen.



Ralph Snart Adventures Trade Paperback III – new material for the first time in print by Marc Hansen.



Vespers character sketch of Captain Paul Johnson by Tony C. Caputo.

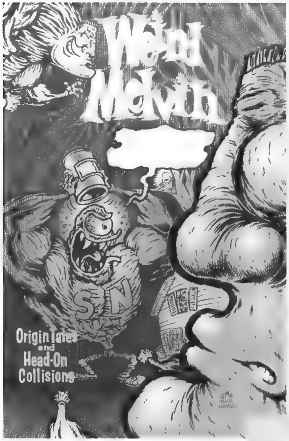
Vespers character sketch of the devil by Tony C. Caputo.

Vespers Graphic Novel cover, by Tony C. Caputo.

inadvertently shrinks himself down to the size of a bug. As Vinny shrinks, the adventure only grows!

Among all of these exciting new projects, my absolute favorite product is *Vespers*; not because I think it's the best, but because I created it myself. I spent the time conceptualizing, writing, penciling, lettering and inking (with David Mowry's help) this graphic novel. I was the one spending an entire week on just the wrap-around cover, and countless other days designing the whole book. It was an enormous effort that increased my respect for the craft and its principles. *Vespers* was also the most fun I've ever had in the comic book industry and I can't wait to start on book two.

Last, but certainly not the least product in terms of my fondness, is the new *Ralph Snart Adventures* stories, originally released at ralphsnart.com, but



Weird Melvin Trade Paperback I cover, by Marc Hansen.

now seeing print for the first time ever. This is an annual strategy that Hansen and I have developed to satisfy the demands of Snart fans worldwide. I'm particularly happy about this because now I can read the new stories myself. It's not that I'm a luddite, but after a hard day at work—all of it in front of a computer—the last thing I want to do is cozy up to entertainment on another computer. I still enjoy a printed book for relaxation.

One of the most common questions that I'm asked by those familiar with the original NOW is, "What's different about the new NOW Comics 3.0?" While there are many differences, I've boiled them down to four major changes. The first is our overall philosophy and business model; we're a book publisher, not a periodical publisher. As you might imagine from the projects I have described, readers shouldn't expect to see monthly comics from NOW Comics 3.0, because they are no longer our focus.

Additionally, the structure of the company has changed. Marc Hansen and Barry Petersen are two of NOW's equity partners. Our authors who present a solid commitment to the organization will likely also become partners in the future. It's the best way for them to truly benefit from the company's success.

The third difference between the old and new NOW is experience. I've started or assisted in the startup of five organizations, and, as they say, hindsight is always 20/20. I'm going for the long-term this time around and it doesn't matter if NOW isn't number three in market share like it was 14 years ago, or has sales that are competitive with the "big guys." The most important thing to me is publishing exceptional products for a long time to come, and keeping those books available in print and in the public eye.

The final differentiator is my personal role in the company. In the original NOW, I was managing the business more than I was creating anything, and that took its toll on many facets of my life, as well as the company itself. This time, I am going to remain primarily in a creative role, because that's what I enjoy the most about comics. I became a publisher because I loved comics so much; I just had to make them. Experience has taught me that I don't need to focus on quantity, but work on quality. That's what you can expect from us NOW.

Weird Melvin Trade Paperback II cover (Comic Strips from the **Comics Buyer's Guide**), by Marc Hansen.

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"The Question" and Answers: Comic Book Marketplace talks with Tommy Lee Edwards

conducted by Dan Johnson

The following interview has a lot to do with one main Question. More specifically, it has to do with The Question, *the mysterious, faceless crime-fighter that Steve Ditko created for Charlton Comics in the late 1960s. The character, perhaps the most commercially successful embodiment of Ditko's own social views, has been a cult favorite ever since his introduction. The popularity of the character grew when the Charlton super-heroes were purchased by DC Comics in the mid-1980s, and since that time The Question has become an intricate part of DC's universe. In late 2004, The Question got a major re-launch at DC Comics via a new mini-series by writer Rick (*Swamp Thing, The One*) Veitch and artist Tommy Lee Edwards. Critical and fan response to the mini-series has been very positive, both for Veitch's new take on this old classic and also for Edwards' artwork.*

Recently Comic Book Marketplace *sat down with Tommy Lee Edwards to discuss his work on* The Question. *This interview also proved to be the perfect venue to discuss Edwards' other line of work. Besides being a comics artist with work under his belt for DC (*Superman: Man of Steel, Gemini Blood *and* Batman: Golden Streets of Gotham*), Wildstorm (*Star Trek, Deathblow: Wild Times, Disavowed*), Marvel (*X-Men, X-Factor, Moon Knight, Daredevil*) as well as such independent titles as* The Blair Witch Project, Starship Troopers, The Crow, The Shield, Hellboy: Weird Tales *and* Zombie World: Winter's Dregs*; Edwards is also an in-demand graphic artist whose work has been used to promote such successful film franchises as Star Wars, Men in Black and Harry Potter. This summer, Edwards' artwork will be used to launch two of 2005's most anticipated feature films:* Star Wars Episode III: Revenge of the Sith *and* Batman Begins.

Comic Book Marketplace: First, let's get some background information on you, Tommy. Where are you from originally and what first sparked your interest in becoming an artist?

Tommy Lee Edwards: I was born in Texas in 1973, and mostly grew up in Michigan. I always drew, painted and wrote stories. I messed around with the Super-8 camera, and then video. So, I guess I've always been interested in telling stories in the visual form. I was four when *Star Wars* came out. That made a huge impact on me, and pushed me to draw even more.

I had support from my parents when I was young, and was lucky enough to start private art lessons in the sixth grade. That continued through high school, and helped me ready my portfolio for college. This also solidified what I wanted to do for a living.

CBM: What genres excite you the most when it comes to storytelling?

Edwards: I love historical stuff. When I'm done with DC's *The Question*, I plan on spending time with some of my own ideas, which usually revolve around westerns or war stories. I like sci-fi, too. Most of my favorite movies are horror flicks.

CBM: Judging from your artwork, you strike me as a very well-rounded artist. Is there any particular medium you prefer to work in?

Edwards: Not really. As long as I'm not stuck on one thing for too long, I usually enjoy all types of illustration work. Comics are typically the most unique, and give me the most creative freedom. I truly love creating comics.

I think the most fun job I ever had was on a brief stint providing storyboards and concepts for Dream Works' *Sinbad: Legend of the Seven Seas*. Earlier this year, that film's director (Patrick Gilmore) invited me to work on a project at Electronic Arts with him. That was a blast, too. I spent about four months doing concept designs and an animatic for an upcoming *Command and Conquer* game.

CBM: Tell our readers about your first work in comics.

Edwards: I guess "technically" I'd have to say that my first published comic was a B/W sci-fi thing I did as a senior in high-school called *Eight Ball*. I had no idea that there was already a wonderful book in existence by that same title. It was fun making that, because I wrote it, drew it, made the films, made the plates, printed it on the press in my school's graphics room, collated it and stapled it—all three-hundred or so copies. I had to charge $7 a copy just to try and make my money back.

When I was going to Art Center (around 1992), I landed a job drawing a super-low budget vampire sci-fi thing called *System Shock*. The first mainstream stuff I had done was for Valiant (*Secret Weapons*), and some stuff at Milestone. I look back at that stuff

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now and want to vomit. I next started getting work at DC, drawing stuff like *Judge Dredd*, *Detective Comics* and *Gemini Blood*. Yeah, those were the early days.

CBM: What was it that got you interested in the comics field?

Edwards: Besides the required reading in AP English class and the obligatory book reports, comics were the main literary source for me growing up. When I was little, I really liked Marvel stuff like *Captain America*, *Silver Surfer*, *Spider-Man* and *Thor*. I really started "collecting" comics in junior high. Seventh grade was big for me. It was the 1980s, and a lot of great stuff was happening.

Certain writers and artists really got me inspired to do comics as a living. Back then, I loved Walter Simonson's *Thor*, John Romita Jr's *X-Men* (and later, *Daredevil*), and especially Howard Chaykin's *American Flagg!*. I can't tell you how many times I've read Howard's *Shadow* mini-series from DC.

Comics fell out-of-favor with me shortly after, though. I was graduating high school, and the subject matter and artwork that "graced" the newsstands was mostly uninteresting for me. It wasn't until I met Howard Chaykin that my interest in comics crept up again.

CBM: I'm delighted to hear that Chaykin got you interested in comics again. How did you come to meet him?

Edwards: I met Howard at a comic convention in Los Angeles in 1992. I read that he was going to be there, so I decided to make the trip to meet him. I was nineteen, and living in Pasadena. At Art Center, I had really great teachers. However, none of them knew anything about the craft of comics. The closest may have been a figure drawing teacher of mine named Burne Hogarth, because of all the *Tarzan* strips he did back in the late 1930s and early forties.

I really wanted to show some of my portfolio to a comic book creator. Howard was one of the best, in my book. To make a long story short, I showed him my work, and we hit it off and became friends. The common thread we have is that we're both heavily into illustration of the 1960s. We're into all the same stuff, and really let those influences seep into our comics.

CBM: Who else would you say influenced your work in the past, and who are some of the artists that you go back to now (either in the comics field or in the film industry) for inspiration?

Edwards: Alex Toth is a giant influence, as are many of the 1960s illustrators I hinted at earlier. I love Austin Briggs, Noel Sickles, Al Parker, Bob Peak and Bernie Fuchs. Other comics guys I find inspiration in are Milt Caniff, Frank Robbins and Attilio Micheluzzi. When I was kid I loved (and

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still love) Bill Sienkewicz, Simonson, Mignola and lots of other guys I'm forgetting right now.

I think most illustrators who tell stories with their art are very influenced by certain filmmakers, as well. Directors like Mario Bava, Michael Mann, Sergio Leone and Tony Scott have all really affected the way I'll decide to conduct my comics, children's books and storyboard work. There's so much involved in the endless kinds of choices you have with comics and the way you want to "shoot" the story: how to pace it, how to light it, how to frame and crop it, what angles to use, how to make the storytelling clear, and get all the coverage you need to establish a sense of time and space.

CBM: Were you a fan of Steve Ditko's work? I think Ditko would be at home amongst the artists you mentioned previously. Did you go back and study the work he did on The Question originally?

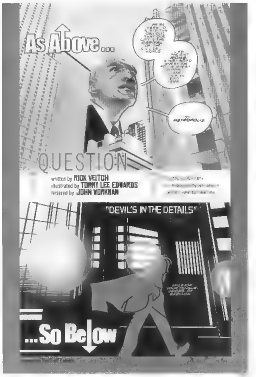
Edwards: The Ditko *Question* comics were my biggest influence when starting the new *Question* series. I purposefully stayed away from the 1980s version, because it is so far removed from how I see the character "visually." I really need to let only certain things seep into my subconscious in order to stay within a mind-set. I've always admired Mr. Ditko's work, but did not consider myself a fan until recently.

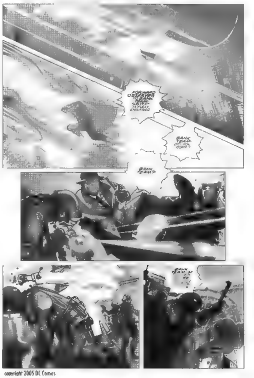
CBM: How did you come to be involved with the new *Question* mini-series with Rick Veitch?

Edwards: Jim Lee called me about two, almost three years ago and offered me *The Question*. I was working on a lot of film and book-type stuff at the time, and was very eager to get going on a comic again. I am very proud of *The Question*. The book is a DC property, but thankfully being edited through the Wildstorm division. Wildstorm has been a treat to work with. They give me a ton of freedom to illustrate *The Question* to the best of my abilities. Jim Lee generated the project, and put Rick Veitch and I together. Rick's scripts are incredibly smart. This six-issue series is definitely the best "super-hero" comic I've ever been involved with. I'm drawing and coloring the interior art, along with providing painted covers. I also put together all of the ads and promotional material for the series.

It took a long time for the project to get off the ground, however, as DC went back-and-forth on how to approach the mini-series. It ultimately became part of a new "line" of DCU books that would all take place in Metropolis. This is back when (I think) Wolfgang Peterson was going to do a Superman/Batman movie. Anyway, the whole line has pretty-much fallen apart, as Veitch and I were the only ones able to deliver a solid product.

Jim was really cool by offering me *The Question* in the way that he understands my creative need to approach a comic in my own specific way. I need to have control over all aspects of the art, and I always work with the same letterer, John Workman. John's the best. I can't separate his





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lettering from my art. They are each a part of the same finished piece. I absolutely hate 99% of the computer lettering that's out there right now. It's so lifeless. It's obviously slapped-on as a badly planned after-thought. Oh, here I go again...

CBM: No doubt, being a fan of Howard Chaykin, that has something to do with choosing a letterer who suits your style. It's similar to the work relationship that Howard had with his own letterer of choice, Ken Bruzenak. How did you first get hooked up with John Workman?

Edwards: I've been a fan of John Workman's lettering since I first saw it in junior high. I was particularly impressed by the work he did with Walt Simonson. John's an incredible illustrator, as well. He's really one of the most knowledgeable people I've ever met. Around 1994, I was able to have input into who would letter my art on DC's *Gemini Blood*. John was my first choice. We hit it off creatively, and have religiously worked together ever since. I cherish his artistic opinion and friendship.

He and I have really worked out a method that actually mirrors a bit of the technique I picked up from Chaykin and his letterer, Ken Bruzenak. I lay the whole book out on 8.5" x11" sheets. After that, I blow them up 154% and tape them to the back of my 11"x17" Bristol. I'll use a light box to trace off all of the balloons and panel boarders onto the Bristol. Those 22 pages are then shipped off to John and he works his magic. He basically inks my balloons freehand, while keeping the original shape and size of my indications. Everything is such a unified part of the art.

I had gotten a couple complaints from editors about the "large" size of the word-balloons in my work. They gripe that it's "covering too much of the artwork." What artwork? The lettering is on the board. "It is the artwork." I respond. There's nothing to cover-up. One of the funniest things I ever heard is when Bob Layton told me how much he hated sound effects and large lettering. He told me that it reminds him that he's reading a comic. What the hell does he think we're making here? The balloons and lettering are done before I go to finish one single drawing. The lettering is really the main tool I use to lead the reader's eye through the page. It's also one of the things that make comics so unique. There is no other story-telling medium like it. It would be a shame not to use all of the tools that have proven successful in comics for decades.

CBM: What has it been like working with Rick Veitch on this project?

Edwards: It's always such a rare treat when you are able to work from a script that was written by someone who can draw. Rick gives me exactly what I need. Everything is very thought-out and clear. We're always exchanging ideas on the phone to try and make *The Question* the best comic out there.

So many times in the past, I'll get a comics script and say," Oh God—how am I gonna polish this turd...?" With

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Rick Veitch:

The Man with the Answers to *The Question*

by Dan Johnson

Besides getting the chance to sit down with The Question*'s new artist, Tommy Lee Edwards,* Comic Book Marketplace *also caught up with the writer behind DC's new hit mini-series, comics legend Rick (*Swamp Thing, The One*) Veitch, for a brief Q&A.*

Comic Book Marketplace: What inspired the new *Question* mini-series, and how did you come on board as the writer for this series?

Rick Veitch: *The Question* traveled a long winding road with at least one major detour before it actually arrived at its destination. Maybe three years ago, Wildstorm sent me a list of DC characters that were up for grabs. Most of them were second bananas or headliners that no one at DC had any plans for. The idea was to come up with an original and modern take on any of them. The Question was on the list and I pitched the idea for the urban shaman angle and they loved it. But it turned out someone else was lined up for Question, so they suggested I apply the idea to one of the other characters on the list and Vigilante seemed the best fit. So I wrote two scripts for the Vigilante using the urban shaman idea with Carlos D'anda lined up as artist. Since Carlos likes to do wild and over the top fantasy stuff, the original concept lightened up a bit, but it was still good.

Then Jim Lee and Dan Didio were talking about putting a Superman project together with three or four supporting titles. Dan saw the Vigilante scripts and said "This should be the Question!" And since the other Question writer hadn't panned out we went back to square

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Rick Veitch's scripts, I say to myself, "Oh God—I hope I don't screw this up..." It's a nice feeling.

CBM: Without giving away too much about the story, what can you tell the readers of *Comic Book Marketplace* about this project?

Edwards: Our Question series is very much in the vein of the classic Steve Ditko creation from back in the late 1960s. The primary difference here is that DC requested that the series take place in Metropolis. Rick and I were initially a little freaked by this. I mean, along with Superman, what in the world does Metropolis need with another super-hero? What kind of crime could possibly exist there? As soon as we started asking those questions, we began to generate ideas for characters. The ideas literally started to fly.

Superman obviously shows up in *The Question*. Even when we don't see him, he's always a presence. He has, in some way, affected virtually every character in this Question series. Rick Veitch and I have made Superman "larger than life." He's approached very differently than Vic Sage or The Question. The Question is very anonymous. Visually, he's a featureless face in the crowd. Superman is obviously on the other end of the spectrum. As much as I have trouble with the super-hero genre, I still have dreams of tackling certain icons. I have always wanted to draw Superman, and now I get my shot.

Rick has been able to keep very true to the original Ditko version of The Question, while at the same time giving a nod to the 1980s Denny O'Neil version. On top of that, Rick has definitely given the character his own original slant. Rick's really gotten into the character, and has played-up the alter ego contrasts between Vic Sage and The Question personas.

CBM: Supes seems to be the one character everyone wants to try their hand at, but at the same time he is such an iconic character the idea of working on one of his stories makes folks a little nervous. What did you think when you knew you would get to draw him for *The Question*?

Edwards: I was a little nervous about drawing Superman because I've never felt comfortable in my ability to draw super-heroes. The way in which Veitch and I depict Superman is very unique, though. Superman seems very "real" in The Question. Because of the creative freedom I feel on *The Question*, Superman definitely became something all our own.

CBM: Is there any chance you might work with Rick on another project in the future?

Edwards: I really want to. He does too, and that's a huge compliment to me. We're tossing around a couple ideas right now. One of them is the possibility of another Question series. I've really been leaning away from wanting to do work-for-hire comic books, but tackling some

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one. Jim brought in Tommy and I was able to get back to the grittier approach I had originally envisioned. The rest is history.

CBM: Given your success as a writer/artist, was there any hesitation on your part to turn the art chores over to another illustrator?

Veitch: No. I love scripting comics and working with other artists. It's a whole different mode of creativity than the one I'm usually in doing my own stuff, so it's a good way to clean the palette and get re-energized and find those new collaborative areas I might not explore on my own. One of my fondest memories is of writing the *Teknophage* back in the mid-90s with Bryan Talbot doing the art.

CBM: Speaking of illustrators, what can you tell us about Tommy Lee Edwards coming on board for this project?

VEITCH: I think the planets and stars lined up for me when I got to work with Tommy! While it's obvious when looking at the finished pages, the guy's a genius; he's also the kind of artist a writer will kill for. Doesn't matter how weird or complex I write things, he understands it and gives me everything I'm asking and more. Which is not a simple feat with the *Question*'s complex dual channel storyline either! I especially like his color approach. His Question really stands out visually.

CBM: Without giving away too much, what can you tell the readers of *Comic Book Marketplace* about this new mini-series?

Veitch: The basic concept is that Vic Sage has been out on the street for so long in his role as the vigilante Question, that he's come to believe that he perceives an alternate reality. The series is partly told from the perspective of this when he lands in Metropolis he becomes involved in a plot to kill Superman through this

established DC characters again with Rick would be a blast.

CBM: I have read that you studied film and illustration at the Art Center College of Design. Were you planning to go into the film business before comics?

Edwards: I started Art Center as an illustration major, and then eventually switched over to film. The two mediums are very similar in my view and I decided to study both as I wanted to learn as much as possible. My main source of income is in film-related illustration. Sometimes it's in advertising or books, and sometimes it's in the form of storyboarding and concept design.

I considered doing comics for "fun" mostly. As I said, Chaykin made the comics opportunity real for me, by inspiring me and recommending my work to industry professionals. For a while, I was doing a ton of comics. Then, I was doing mostly film, animation and game-design work. Now, I'm doing a pretty even amount of both.

CBM: Even though *The Question* is proving to be a success, it doesn't mean you've left the film world behind totally. After all, your artwork has been licensed to promote a number of successful film projects. What got you into this line of work?

Edwards: I had been trying to get *Star Wars* work from Dark Horse for years, but the editors would never bother showing my stuff to Lucasfilm. They would just shake their heads and say "they'll never go for this..." But then, I hooked up with Random House. *Darth Maul's Revenge* was the first Star Wars project I illustrated for them. I'm on my third Star Wars children's book right now, and Lucasfilm has been my biggest client ever since. They've kept me busy with all of the RPG book covers, magazines, advertising, and a ton of

?????

strange shamanic dimension that only Question and a few others seem to see. It also turns out that Vic Sage has been secretly in love with Lois Lane since they were in journalism school together.

CBM: What prompted putting the Question into Superman's backyard? What can you tell us about how the Question will impact Superman's world (and vice versa)?

Veitch: DC was building a four character launch around Jim Lee's *Superman* called Superstorm. I think it was Jim who suggested bringing Question to Metropolis to use as a dark gritty take-no-prisoners character in contrast to Superman's solar virtue. But Superstorm wasn't ready when Jim came off *Batman*, so he and Brian went straight into their current storyline. Out of all the other titles, only the Question came in on time so they decided to release it on its own. Which is why it sort of snuck out into the marketplace.

CBM: Like so many of Steve Ditko's creations, the Question is all about truth, and that is evident further in the wonderful last line in issue one, "Speak to me, Metropolis." What truth will our hero uncover before it is all said and done?

Veitch: The reader will go from seeing the Question as crazy, to understanding the method of his madness. But Question embodies that other powerful thread that runs through Ditko's best creations: he's an outsider.

copyright 2005 Tommy Lee Edwards

other stuff.

That kind of work was eventually noticed by people at places like Sony, Coca-Cola, Warner Bros and Hallmark Entertainment.

CBM: You mentioned *Star Wars* had a huge impact on you when you were a kid. I can imagine that landing your first work with Lucasfilm must have been a dream come true. Could you describe the day you got that call to do *Darth Maul's Revenge*?

Edwards: I got the job through e-mail, which is a little anti-climactic. It was also a gradual process, as I had to "win-over" all the people involved. I was very excited though, especially since I knew how picky Lucasfilm was about who they'd let illustrate their properties. I may have gotten an even bigger thrill, when George Lucas bought every-single piece of art I produced for that book. It was great for me to learn recently that several of my paintings and drawings are displayed around Skywalker Ranch.

CBM: Besides *Star Wars III: Revenge of the Sith*, you've also been attached to a number of high profile films, especially the Harry Potter films and *Batman Begins*. What kind and how much reference material are you given to work with for your art?

Edwards: Typically, I'll start working on projects like these before much of anything has been shot or built or even written. It helps a lot, when I'm doing the promotional illustrations for a movie, to have been to the sets. I got to do this with *Men in Black II* and *Batman Begins*. Being able to work on-location, and draw from the actual props and costumes is invaluable. As the movie is shot, the studio will feed me whatever available reference they may have as it comes in. I'm at that stage right now on an *Episode III* children's book. So much of the new movies are digital, I may actually never get finished reference. I often have to work from early concept art or rough CG models.

I started working on the first Harry Potter movie before they had cast the kids. Therefore, my initial illustrations went from my interpretations of the book. As time went on, I had more reference. In the end, I ended up doing about sixty or seventy ink drawings and paintings to help promote that film. The art was also used on all movie-related merchandise and product.

CBM: I know you're a professional, but are there ever any times when you're standing there on the sets or you get a package from Lucasfilm and your inner fan kicks in and you just say to yourself, "This is just soooooooo awesome!"?

Edwards: Oh, sure. It all makes me feel like a kid again. It happens every time I get a package of screen-shots from *Episode III*. Standing on the *Batman Begins* set in London and touching the Batmobile was super-cool. I had the goofiest look on my face when it rumbled out onto a street in Chicago, and then raced by me being chased by police cars. I mostly wanted my son to be there. It's his turn to get excited about that stuff, and I try to share as much of that with my kids as possible. My son is six, and my daughter is three. I remember being those ages, and I know what a positive creative impact the extra exposure to this kind of stuff can have.

CBM: What do you have coming up that the readers of *CBM* should be on the look-out for? What's next for you after *The Question*?

Edwards: As far as comics go, I'm not sure yet. I'm trying to get one of my own creations off the ground. Outside of comics—the *Star Wars Episode III* children's book for Random House ("*Obi-Wan's Foe*") comes out in April. I've got another huge Star Wars project coming up for Del Rey that involves my doing 50 paintings. I'll probably get back into developing another game for Electronic Arts, too. It's shaping up to be a busy year already. I'm very thankful for that.

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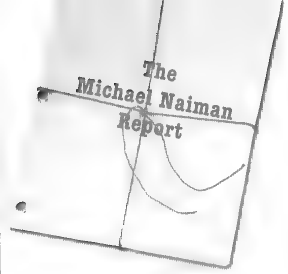
Interested in learning more about Tommy Lee Edwards and his artwork? Check out his website at ***www.tommyleeedwards.com****. Special thanks to John Hitchcock, the owner of Parts Unknown: The Comic Book Store in Greensboro, NC, for helping make this interview possible.*



by Michael Naiman

Meeska, Mooska, Mouseketeer!

Aye Carumba!—and that's not Bart Simpson saying it, but rather Mexico's Geronimo Gutierrez, the Undersecretary for North American Affairs. Looks as if our neighbor to the south has had to defend a government comic book showing illegal immigrants how to cross the border and live quietly in the United States!

About 1.5 million copies of the comic have been distributed to several states in central Mexico with high migration rates. The 32-page four color primer, published by Mexico's Foreign Ministry, gives would-be migrants tips including how to swim across the Rio Grande and avoid dehydration in the desert. It also sets out their legal rights on detention as well as medical and consular privileges.

Now then, the comic book savvy illegal alien could gather a few dozen near mint/mint copies, have them CGCd and sell them for a tidy profit on eBay (pay no taxes) and live the life of luxury in the these United States! *Aye Carumba!*

We all love anniversaries and celebrating them. This year marks some of the following *Great Events in History*: 70 years ago (1935) Elvis was born; 60 years ago (1945) WWII ends; 50 years ago (1955) Disneyland opened; 40 years ago (1965) Ed White II was the first American to walk in space; and 20 years ago (1985) the Disco era began with the release of *The Hustle*. Hmmmmm—maybe I should have stopped while I was ahead. But now, for some "real" comic book anniversary notations.

70 years ago (1935) *New Fun*, the first comic book with all original content, is published by Major Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson. His company would eventually be known as DC Comics. In October's issue #6, Siegel and Shuster's first professional work appears. Before selling Superman they invented other characters, like Slam Bradley and Doctor Occult.

65 years ago (1940) on February 12, the radio series officially debuts. *Action Comics* #23 has Superman's arch-nemesis criminal scientist Luthor with red hair. Clark Kent's newspaper is called the *Daily Planet* in *Superman* #4. It was the radio show that first changed the name of the newspaper to the *Daily Planet*, and called the editor Perry White. *Superman* #7 introduces Perry White as Clark's newspaper editor.

60 years ago (1945) Mort Weisinger becomes editor of the Superman titles. The adventures of Superman as a boy in Smallville start with *More Fun Comics* #101's introduction of Superboy. Superboy had a laboratory and trophy room hidden in the Kent's basement, with a secret access tunnel he could use when becoming Superboy. The initial Superboy scripts were by Don Cameron. The first story said Kryptonians were not super-powered.

55 years ago (1950) *Superboy* #10 introduces Superboy's friend Lana Lang. In the Superboy adventures, Lana often acted like Lois would toward Superman. In 1965, she also acted as the costumed character Insect Queen (origin in *Superboy* #124). *Superman* #65—first time Superman encounters other Kryptonian survivors, in this case the villains Mala, U-Ban, and K120.

50 years ago (1955) *Adventure Comics* #210 introduces Suberboy's Kryptonian pet dog Krypto the Super-Dog. Krypto was originally Superman's pet on Krypton. Jor-El had launched Krypto in an experimental rocket. The rocket was believed lost after a collision with a meteor, but when Krypton exploded a few days later, the rocket was swept along with Superman's. Krypto's rocket reached Earth after Superman's. Krypto found Clark Kent and posed as Clark's dog Chip, while Clark was in Smallville.

45 years ago (1960) an updated version of the 1940's Justice Society with Superman as a member is tried out in *Brave & The Bold* #28-30 called the Justice League of America. Being a success, *Justice League of America* #1 soon follows. *Superman Annual* #1 appears. *Superman* #141's "Superman's Return to Krypton," written by Jerry Siegel, has Superman seeing his Kryptonian parents and meeting Lyra Lerrol. The artist was Wayne Boring. In *Adventure Comics* #271 "How Luthor met Superboy," Lex Luthor's first name and the origin of his hatred of Superman since their childhood is revealed.

January Superman birthdays just celebrated: Jan 2, *Superman vs. The Amazing Spider-Man* is released in 1976, the first time that DC and Marvel Comics characters team up; Jan 5, George Reeves, star of the *Adventures of Superman* television series, born in 1914; Jan 14, *Superman's Girlfriend Lois Lane* #1 goes on sale in 1958; Jan 15, Phyllis Coates, Lois Lane in *Superman and the Mole Men* (1951) and the first year of *Adventures of Superman* television series, born in 1927; Jan 16, John Hamilton, Perry White in the *Adventures of Superman* television series, born in 1886; Jan 30, Gene Hackman, Lex Luthor in the Superman films, born in 1930.

Recent Sales: *Action* #23 VF $1050, #35 GD $155, #68 GD $146, #89 GD $72, #92 GD $96, #97 VG+ $100, #100 VG $144, #101 VG+ $280; *Superman* #11 GD $199, #13 GD $203, #16 VG $175, #17 GD $490, #21 VG $265, #24 FN $503, #26 VG $360, #34 VG $156, #35 VG $135.

[continued on page 80]

CBM Market Watch

A report of market indicator sales (including % of Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide) by Michael Naiman

Action
#168 FN $116 81%
#197 FN $99 72%
#204 FN $89 74%
#211 FN $125 104%
#242 GD $77 56%
#246 VF $139 76%
#252 VG $266 93%
#253 VG+ $83 83%
#286 VF+ $40 60%

Adventure
#255 VF/NM $125 59%
#262 VF $37 36%
#275 VF $79 54%

Air War Stories
#1 NM $44 88%

Amazing Spider-Man
#2 VG- $611 101%
#3 VG- $435 101%
#4 VG+ $383 101%
#5 VG+ $300 96%
#7 VG- $118 59%
#8 VG $133 67%
#9 VG+ $163 77%
#10 VG+ $213 106%
#11 GD $62 103%
#12 VG+ $129 108%
#13 VG+ $160 104%
#14 VG+ $265 80%
#28 VF- $182 40%
#50 VG+ $100 102%

Army War Heroes
#1 VF $26 79%

Avengers
#3 VG+ $123 150%
#4 GD $106 74%
#7 VF+ $175 80%

Batman
#126 VG- $29 50%
#237 VF $49 92%

Brave & Bold
#75 VF/NM $45 94%

Capt. Marvel Adv
#8 VG+ $142 62%
#10 VG+ $83 36%
#26 VG $74 67%
#27 FN $102 62%
#27 VG+ $180 163%
#35 FN $81 54%
#39 VG $135 146%
#100 VG $84 91%

Captain America
#100 FN $73 78%

Capt. Marvel Jr.
#11 GD $26 38%
#17 VG $20 18%
#25 VG $38 41%
#69 VG $37 69%
#110 VG $32 89%
#118 GD $12 66%

Charlie Chan (Dell)
#1 VF/NM $34 65%

Conan
#1 VF $108 69%

Daredevil
#1 VG $386 94%

Detective
#298 VF+ $331 182%

Doc Savage (GK)
#1 VF $46 61%

Donald Duck
#45 FN $18 46%
#54 VF- $27 22%
#60 FN $20 39%

Flash
#161 NM- $117 111%
#170 NM $204 185%

Ghost Manor
#1 VF/NM $30 83%

Green Hornet (Dell)
#1 VF+ $96 59%

Green Lantern
#1 GD $285 90%
#12 VF $132 79%
#44 NM- $128 102%

Hawkman
#3 VF $49 47%
#5 VF/NM $99 65%

Impact (EC)
#1 VG- $34 106%

Incredible Hulk
#3 VF $718 66%
#4 FN $210 56%
#102 VF $60 36%
#102 VF/NM $76 31%
#103 VF+ $28 38%
#108 VF+ $22 42%
#110 FN $13 72%
#110 VF/NM $25 42%
#112 VF $21 58%
#118 FN $9 50%
#122 VF/NM $35 51%
#124 FN $8 66%
#162 VF/NM $26 93%
#180 VF $70 85%
#181 VF $440 73%
#181 VF $549 91%
#182 FN $30 Guide

Iron Man
#15 NM $103 171%

Jimmy Olsen
#3 VG $203 147%
#9 VG $102 138%

Korak (GK)
#1 NM- $51 51%

Lois Lane
#3 FN $217 142%
#9 VG+ $81 135%

MAD
#9 FN $153 84%
#10 FN $168 92%
#12 FN $133 92%
#13 FN $89 62%
#14 FN $173 120%

Magnus (GK)
#1 VF+ $76 43%

Marvel Family
#50 GD $10 59%
#56 GD $31 206%
#70 GD $15 Guide
#77 VG $50 104%
#80 GD $15 88%
#88 GD $20 118%

Mary Marvel
#1 GD $100 50%
#17 GD $102 408%
#18 FN $103 137%

Panic
#1 FN $65 78%
#2 FN $69 164%
#4 FN $34 103%

Showcase
#4 FN "$1302" 36%

Star Trek
#1 VF $455 152%

Strange Tales
#101 GD $57 66%
#115 VG+ $65 77%

Superboy
#1 VG $771 51%
#75 VF $50 63%
#138 VF/NM $27 43%
#147 VF $19 50%

Superman
#37 GD $103 103%
#38 VG $188 94%
#40 VG $136 68%
#41 GD $82 102%
#45 GD $80 Guide
#46 VG $153 95%
#51 VG $87 66%
#52 VG $105 80%
#113 VF $215 105%
#114 VF $243 119%
#202 VF/NM $61 103%

Tales to Astonish
#10 VF $189 79%
#12 VF $143 74%
#13 VF $138 71%
#14 FN $47 58%
#15 VF $92 36%
#18 VG $30 56%

WDC&S
#45 FN $18 16%
#51 VG $39 78%
#60 VG $61 122%
#68 VG $21 50%
#77 VG $27 79%
#85 VG $23 77%

Whiz
#5 GD $78 33%
#15 VG $245 91%
#32 GD $50 93%
#38 GD+ $50 125%
#42 GD $31 86%
#63 VG- $45 80%
#90 FN $31 41%
#154 GD+ $33 48%

X-Men
#3 FN $275 135%
#28 VF $72 59%
#35 VF $71 52%

John Hauser

PO Box 510673
New Berlin WI 53151
262-789-1863

Golden Age—It's getting tougher to find Golden Age comics. Most of them are no longer in the hands of the original owners. The main supply of these is going to come from collectors. Luckily the demand is down so that is keeping the prices in check.

Pre-Code Horror and Science Fiction—Content no longer seems to mean much. Collectors are mostly buying based on condition and what's on the cover. There are a great many discoveries to be made by younger collectors if they are willing to pick these up and read them.

Silver Age—Marvel is still the king of Silver Age. DC and other publishers sell but not nearly as well. The younger collectors that were kids in the '70s have grown up with a deep appreciation of Marvel Comics. They are very nostalgic for the Defenders, Incredible Hulk, Spider-Man and all those other great Marvels that they grew up with. Apparently DC's made very few inroads in the '70s crowd.

Bronze Age—Luckily this is the strongest area of the current market. These comics are still available and affordable for most collectors. This may not be true in another ten years, so buy them now.

Modern Age—There is plenty of interest in modern comics. Many titles from Marvel and DC are quite good and collectable. This should help interest shift back to DC in a few years.

In closing, there has never been a better time to be a collector. With the advent of eBay collectors can tap into a wealth of material at very affordable prices. Investors can be happy buying high grade CGC certified comics. It seems everyone is happy except the common dealer working the trenches. For everyone else this is the Golden Age of comics.

Bruce Edwards

Quasar Comics
and Collectibles
PO Box 2227
Louisville KY 40201
502-451-4852
www.QuasarComics.com
eBay: quasarcomics

The market continues to see good activity on a wide range of Golden Age to Bronze Age material. We have found that big lots of comics (such as a run of *Superboy* or *Lone Ranger*) will sell better than the same books broken up in very small lots or individual issues (unless they are highly priced individual issues).

Speaking of this type of selling, it certainly seems like eBay is betting that their revenues will increase *without* a large number of cheap items.

For example, I and others used to list many, many comics for starting prices in the $1.00 to $9.99 range knowing that the comic would in all likelihood only go for a little more than the starting price. We would have a nice gallery image and "Buy It Now" button, etc. No longer. With eBay's recent increase in fees, it makes a lot more sense to only place up for auction individual books likely to bring at least $30+ as well as big runs of cheaper stuff. My back-of-the-napkin calculations show that eBay will be losing money on me with their new pricing structure (I'll be listing a lot fewer lots) while I may do better than ever (higher total price realized due to the "big-run effect" on bidding). Yet all of the numerous starting fees lost by eBay will not be offset by the increased final value fees. This only bodes well for the newest competitor to eBay (Overstock.com's auctions).

O.K. Now for some actual prices realized, I'll start with a few runs to illustrate the "big-run effect" I was talking about. All of the books in these lots are in average condition for their age (GA ranged from PR to VG/F, SA ranged from G to F/VF): 19 Marvel Bronze Age Westerns including *Night Rider* #1, *Outlaw Kid* #1, *Ringo Kid* #1, *Kid Colt*, *Two-Gun Kid* and more sold for $35; *Lone Ranger* 19 early Golden Age issues including *FC* #125, *FC* #136, #2, 14, 15, 16, 21, 22, 24, more went for $149; *Lone Ranger* 38 Golden Age comic collection (later issues up to 1958 or so) went for $157; *Red Ryder* collection of 11 issues including #12 (PR), 42, 56, 63, 65 (2), 79, 93, 130, 137, 151 was bid up to $106; *Superboy* #61-99 11 issue collection from 1957-1962 $105; *Superboy* 19 issues #101-128 Silver Age collection closed at $76; and *Superboy* 53 issues from #130-235 Silver/Bronze collection achieved $137.

Here are some individual sale prices with some absolute steals!

Adventures of Alan Ladd #3 VG/F $26.56, #9 VG+ $33.50; *Atom-Age Combat* #2 FR/GD $15.50; *Beyond* #24 GD $19.95, #29 GD $9.99; *Blackhawk* #12 (4th Issue) VG+ $152.54, #21 VG/F $47.66, #108 VG+ $34.88; *Bobby Benson's B-Bar-B Riders* #13 VG+ $16.50; *Boy Explorers* #1 VG+ $86; *Bruce Gentry* #6 GD- $9.99; *Classics Illustrated* #33 Hrn89 Ed4B Sherlock Holmes FN+ $45.44, #44 Hrn78 Mysteries Of Paris F/VF!! $29; *Crack*

Comics #57 FN $28.66; *Double Life of Private Strong* #1 VG/F $37; *Fantastic Four* #48 (1966) PR filler copy looks VF $39.95; *Gabby Hayes Western* #1 VG+ $40, #2 VG/F $26.58; *Green Lantern* #76 VG/F $34.85; *Katy Keene* #59 FN- $16.50; *Long Bow* #1 GD $13; *Looney Tunes* #52 VG/F $16.50; *Man From Uncle* #1 VG/F $12.51; *Picture Stories From American History* #3 VG $13.89; *Rawhide Four Color* #1028 (#1) VG+ $19; *Red Mask* #42 (#1-1954) VG/F $14; *Rod Cameron Western* #2 F/VF $36.58; *Romance Trail* #4 VG+ $20; *Roy Rogers* #1 G/VG $89; *Strange Adventures* #180 Net VG (color touch) $9.99; *Superboy* #100 VG+ $9.99; *Tim Holt* #20 VG 4.0 $13; *White Rider and Super Horse* #6 FN $12; *Wild Wild West* #1 variant photo back cover VG $16.50.

Greg White

Comic Books and Collectibles
PO Box 45-003
Kissimmee FL 34745
407-870-0400
wed55santa@earthlink.net

Welcome to sunny Central Florida. The New Year is upon us and comic book sales will hopefully go through the roof this year! Certain, select issues always sell well while the majority of the titles were a bit slow last year. I find I have to offer discounts to move many titles. Most collectors simply will not pay *Guide* for the majority of comic books. These dealers who always claim to receive full *Guide* or above for non-key books must have a different clientele than the rest of us. I grade my books carefully and accurately. I provide terrific mail order service and keep my prices at reasonable levels (hence no silly multiples of *Guide*) and I find it tough to move most of my books at full *Guide*. I continue to use the *Guide* as a reference and continue to sell comics each week—it is just different in recent years with the advent of eBay and the silly slabbing of comics. I guess that after 36 years of retailing comic books I still don't take well to dramatic changes. Oh well, maybe this is the year.

Silver Age 1955-1969 I bought one fine group of Silver Age Marvel this month due to one of Orlando's long time collectors going through a difficult financial time. He never should have invested in those "high return" stocks! Demand has changed little in recent months—*Amazing Spider-Man* remains our best seller. Other Marvels that sell well are very high grade books (VF/NM or better) and origin or first appearance issues—no surprise there. *Showcase*, *Batman*, Neal Adams books sell best from DC. 1950s DC romance and funny animal also are in demand. Too bad those books don't come in more often.

Recent Sales: *Amazing Spider-Man* #3 VF/NM $2550; *Batman* #232 VG $25; *Dennis the Menace* #10 FN $25; *Fantastic Four* #8 VG $250; *Flash* #123 VG $200; *Life With Archie* #1 FN $100; *Showcase* #8 GD $750; *Superman* #149 VF $100; *Tales of Suspense* #40 VF restored $500.

Golden Age 1935-1955 I bought a nice group of Timely this month. I needed many of the books for my own Timely collection so only about 12 will be available for store sale—some of which have already sold. Demand continues for war covers and good girl art. I have had many single number *World's Finest* comics for sale recently and have had difficulty getting *Guide* prices. Nice books but they just won't sell at full *Guide* anymore. Time to bring the prices back to a more reasonable level? I also have tested the market with a number of other DC titles from the mid 1940s (*All Star*, *Adventure*, *More Fun*, *Action*) with similar results. I did purchase a nice copy of *Batman* #33 that was in one of those silly slabs last week—the owner needed money right away and sold the book at quite a loss. I had great fun breaking open the slab and throwing it out (the plastic slab, not the comic book). I will now offer this issue for sale in its natural, naked state. Wow, someone will actually be able to read this copy!

Recent Sales: *All Star* #32 FN $195; *All Winners* #6 VG $700; *Archie* #24 VG $50; *Batman* #24 FN $350; *Comic Cavalcade* #3 VG $395; *Human Torch* #2 VG $1250; *Mickey Mouse Four Color* #16 GD $300.

Art-Toys-Disneyana Bought a large Star Wars collection last week. Of course this does not qualify as a vintage collection, however it was all boxed items from the late 1970s and early 1980s that should do well for us. We also bought a few 1960s sealed hot rod model kits. Demand continues for vintage superhero toys in original boxes. Those don't come in too often. I also am asked for 1950s and 1960s TV related items but do not have a great deal to offer. Captain Action toys and comic related lunch boxes continue to be in demand. We did pick up a nice collection of boxed Matchbox from 1965-1973—all in unused high grade. These die cast have not sold great for us in the past. We will see what happens this time.

Recent Sales: Batman bubble gum display box, good condition $100; *Flintstones* TV cel from 1985 $30; group of 1960s loose Corgi cars $40; Star Wars early bird certificate/folder, VF $200; Disneyland 1964 guidebook $25.

That will wrap our report this month. When visiting the Walt Disney World area please stop by and say hello!

Opinions expressed in CBM *"Market Reports" are solely those of the individual dealers and collectors who contribute them. Prices vary by location, date of transaction and other factors.*

by Michelle Nolan

This Month it's 1951

Many comic book collectors will forever be confused by that wonderful year 1951.

Was it the end of the Golden Age? Was it the height of the Atomic Age? Or did it actually provide hints of the upcoming Silver Age?

It's entirely a matter of opinion. All we know is that though only a handful of Golden Age super-heroes survived in the first few years following 1951, it was indeed still a wonderful year for comic books.

It was also the first year that many of the earliest Baby Boomers picked up a comic book and tried to "read" it. Born in 1946, the first Boomers entered kindergarten in 1951. But even the first wave of the Boomers didn't really get acquainted with comics until the dawn of the Silver Age in the 1954-60 period.

Though commercial television was fairly widespread in urban areas by 1951, only four or five years after its origins, the tube's effects on comic books, movies and radio had not yet truly been felt. Radio dramas still drew millions of listeners. Lots of serials and B Westerns were still being made, albeit with ever-cheaper budgets. Even dozens of pulp magazines remained on the stands, albeit nowhere near as many as before the initial onslaught of the modern paperback during the 1940s.

And comic books? Still very healthy in that wonderful year. In fact, the total of 2,619 newsstand issues circulated with 1951 dates set yet another record, though even more were destined for publication in 1952, before television and parental alarm began the long, slow decline of our four-colored friends.

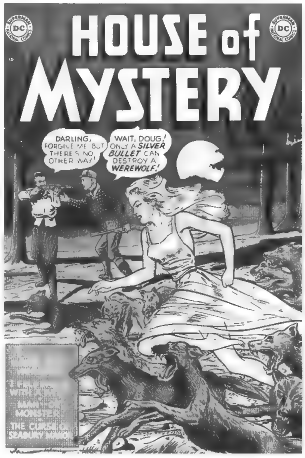
At the time, the modern comic book was still less than two decades old. Many parents still had never read a comic book in 1951, having grown up before the modern version popped into existence in the mid-1930s.

But by 1951, comic books already had turned a corner, because never before or since has there been more variety on the stands. Every genre—past, present and future—was fully represented that year. Yet some genres—romance, crime, horror, western, teen humor, funny animals—had largely supplanted the costume hero and newspaper reprint types that dominated the Golden Age.

All of these trends produced noteworthy books in 1951.

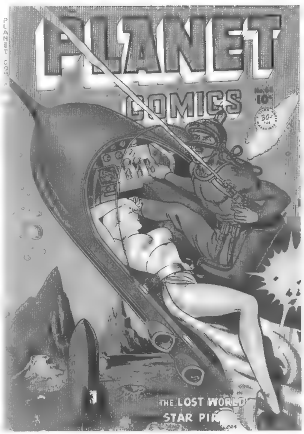
Some fans—but apparently nowhere near enough—mourned the demise of the Justice Society of America with its last Golden Age adventure in *All Star Comics* #51 (Feb-Mar). I, for one, consider that the last true Golden Age issue. Of the final seven Justice Society members—Wonder Woman, Green Lantern, Flash, Hawkman, Atom, Doctor Mid-Nite and Black Canary—only the Amazon Princess survived. And when Wonder Woman left the pages of *Sensation Comics* with #106 (Dec 1951), even the greatest heroine in the history of comics had declined from appearances in four regular Golden Age titles to just one, her own bimonthly comic. Only Superman and Batman were deemed worthy of multiple featured appearances following 1951.

Even so, a multitude of cool new comics debuted in 1951. Three of the best were *Mystery in Space* #1 (Apr-May), *House of Mystery* #1 (Dec 1951/Jan 1952) and *The Fox and The Crow* #1 (Dec 1951/Jan 1952). Issue after issue, these titles presented delight after delight well into the 1960s. They were among DC's greatest commercial successes outside of the super stars. DC came up with lesser but still noteworthy winners in *Flippity and Flop* #1 (Dec 1951/Jan 1952) and *Big Town* #1 (Jan 1951), both among my favorites of the Fifties.


HOUSE of MYSTERY
DARLING, I'M SORRY, BUT THERE'S NO OTHER WAY!
WAIT, DOUG! ONLY A SILVER BULLET CAN KILL A WEREWOLF!
THE CURSE OF THE SCARLET SCARAB!

But while DC (273 issues) and Dell (256) most likely had the highest combined circulations, Marvel (an industry-leading 305 issues) began a glorious seven-year run under its Atlas imprint, which began appearing regularly late in the year. Nothing represented the rise of Marvel better than *Strange Tales* #1 (Jun), ultimately the most successful of the multitude of weird tale types produced by Martin Goodman's firm.

Meanwhile, Fawcett (300 issues) was still in its glory, albeit largely with romance comics and the still-popular



Marvel Family characters. And a whopping 29 other companies published totals ranging from 146 to 11 issues, with a few firms on the way up (Harvey, Charlton) but many others on the way down.

Fawcett's *Hot Rod Comics* #1 (undated) and Charlton's *Hot Rods and Racing Cars* #1 (Nov) created a mini-genre that is now perhaps more popular with collectors than it originally may have been with readers.

Two steadfast Golden Age costume heroes departed the scene in 1951—*Black Cat* with #29 (Jun), even though she was oddly still on the cover of #30, and *Daredevil* with #79 and #80 (Oct and Nov). Daredevil actually left both the country and his comic book to the *Little Wise Guys* following #69, but made a brief comeback.

Crime comics were never bigger than in 1951—an amazing 15 titles began with "crime" and several others included the word in the logo. Science fiction, though, was still in its four-color cradle. DC produced *Mystery in Space* as a companion to *Strange Adventures*, which sold well from its blast-off in 1950. *Mystery in Space* came along just in time—Fiction House's *Planet Comics*, the only science fiction title to last throughout the 1940s, appeared only once in 1951, with an undated #65. *Planet* struggled for eight more issues before soon expiring in both comic book and pulp versions along with the company.

Captain Video, the first of the science fiction heroes created for television, lasted only six issues, all in licensed stories from Fawcett in 1951. The vast majority of science-fictional heroes met the same quick circulation crackup in the next few years. *Mystery in Space*, though, was always special, under the editorship of science fiction legend Julius Schwartz, and so was *Strange Adventures*. It should be noted that DC's Captain Comet, who debuted in *Strange Adventures* #9 (Jun), was among the creative triumphs of 1951 even though he enjoyed a run of only slightly more than three years.

Not many 1951 comics are more sought after, however, than *Detective Comics* #168 (Feb), with a nicely rendered origin of the Joker. *Walt Disney's Comics & Stories* #125 (Feb) is nowhere near as valuable, but I treasure it just as much, what with the first appearance of the Junior Woodchucks, yet more proof of the storytelling genius of Carl Barks. Later in 1951, Uncle Scrooge's money bin debuted in *Comics & Stories* #135 (Dec). What would the 1950s be without memories of the Woodchucks and the Money Bin?

As mentioned earlier, DC came up with a winner in *House of Mystery*. That first issue provided some of my greatest Fifties collecting frustration, since I first saw a house ad for #1 with its great cover art for the featured story—"Wanda Was a Werewolf." I spotted the ad circa 1958, but it took more than ten years to find a copy! Wanda, by the way, turned out to be anything but a werewolf, as per DC's formula of finding logical explanations for sensationalistic supernatural covers and story titles. Still, it was one of the best covers of the entire decade.

One of the most unusual comics of 1951 was Avon's undated *Davy Crockett* one-shot, part of a long series of Avon one-shots. Someone unearthed the legend of Davy well before Disney made the frontier hero a pop cultural phenomenon in the 1954-56 era. Avon liked dealing with western history; there can be no other explanation for trying a Davy Crockett title. Avon also published one issue of *Davy Crockett* in 1955—at the same time as a half-dozen other companies took advantage of a legend that could be imitated but not copyrighted. Yet in that wonderful year 1951, Davy Crockett seemed pretty original—if you had never heard of the original coonskin cap hero of the wild comics frontier, DC's Tomahawk.

Pete Kiowa Smith
INDIAN LAWMAN
Detective
COMICS
52 BIG PAGES
We dare you to accept this challenge!
Can YOU outsolve BATMAN and ROBIN and MARK... "The MAN BEHIND the FACE"?

Book Review

by Paul Gravett

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BABY BOOMER COMICS
Craig "Mr Silver Age" Shutt
(Krause Publications, Iola, Wisconsin)
$27.99 paperback
ISBN 0-87349-668-X

Somebody once suggested that the greatest comics in the world are usually those you read when you were 12. Craig Shutt, for example, was 12 in 1966, a time he considers "the absolute peak of the Silver Age's greatness." Reading his 208-page full-color compendium it's clear that the comic books he read back then have captivated him ever since. Craig has been silver-mining comic book lore and legend in his regular column "Ask Mr. Silver Age" in *Comics Buyer's Guide* since 1992 and adopts its friendly, conversational Q&A format for much of this book. As well as the big questions that open most sections, there are several multiple-choice Pop Quiz pages and a string of trivia challenges running across the bottom of the pages designed to test the most knowledgeable reader. Fortunately, the answers are always just over the page and you can rate yourself according to your scores.

Craig disguises himself as the super-hero Mr. Silver Age, your host throughout the book. He is your tour guide to the Museum of Baby Boomer Comics, sporting his blue and yellow costume, mask and cape as delineated by the great artist of Supergirl, Dial H for Hero and countless others, Jim Mooney. Readers are welcomed with a very useful 11-page introduction, asking and answering some of the key questions about the period to make this comic book history accessible to the diehard fan or curious casual reader alike. From this solid grounding, readers can explore six thematic chapters, each named to evoke the period's wonderfully eccentric story titles.

Chapter One is called "The Secret Origin of the Silver Age" and tackles head on the thorny debate about when this dazzling era truly began. After considering a number of options, Craig argues persuasively for the 1956 reinvention of The Flash in *Showcase* #4. He then examines some of the fondly remembered, and misremembered, stories from DC and Marvel. Did you recall that what first triggered Bruce Banner's transformation into The Hulk was not stress or a gamma ray gun but the night time? As for the elf Mopee who was revealed in *The Flash* #167 as Barry Allen's "Heavenly Helpmate" and directed the lightning bolt that hit the chemicals that gave the scientist his speedy powers, he has been mercifully forgotten. Other nuggets include the origin of the overused Marvel title "When Titans Clash!" dating back to a story in *Superman* #17 in 1942, the moral lessons to be learned from JLA classics, and the secrets behind all those gorillas crowding DC's covers.

Super-heroic love, marriage, friendships and more are covered in Chapter 2, "Enter...The Relationship," from Stan Lee's soap opera romances to

Julie Schwartz's long-running team-ups, from Superman's gorgeous Amazonian admirers to "The Batbabes of Gotham City," from Krypto's Space Canine Patrol Agents to Pincus Popnecker, alias the surreal Herbie. In the third chapter "If This Be My Gimmick!," Craig celebrates cool locations like The Coffee Bean Barn, favorite hang-out of Peter Parker and the gang, those fancy costume changes by Iron Man, Captain Atom and Doctor Strange, and other delightful absurdities of Sixties comics. Throughout, Craig may jest but he never sneers, and he never underestimates the sheer imagination it took to create fresh adventures month after month while conforming to the Comics Code Authority. In Craig's view, "Writers found creative ways to write within the Code restrictions and produced a generation of all-ages comics in the process. The Silver Age was a thriving, exciting period *despite* the Comics Code, not because of it."

Next comes "Peril on the Planet of Pop Culture," a survey of the people and places from the Sixties that somehow found their way into comics, from Beatle-mania to Hollywood directors and stars, from comedy greats Jerry Lewis and the famous scripters for *MAD* to total oddities *Wham-O Giant Comics*, Super-Turtle and The Inferior Five. While it's inevitable that DC and Marvel super-heroes predominate in this volume, I enjoy the way Craig weaves in a few different genres and publishers for variety.

"The Curious Case Of The Quirky Comics" in Chapter 5 faces up to the confusing, even conflicting versions of some of the most familiar tales in comics, such as the origins of Superman and Spider-Man. Craig shows how these mythic fables have been elaborated, adjusted and sometimes totally rewritten, to the point that some of the most basic "truths" have turned out to be completely false. Craig admits that some of these "tales are riddled with revisions that can make a fan's hair stand on edge." I had no idea that Superman's parents had also been rocketed into space, or that baby Kal-El had been adopted by somebody else before the Kents. Actually, these tales reflect editor Mort Weisinger's freewheeling, almost cavalier approach to continuity, happily changing "history" for the sake of generating another startling "true" or "untold" cover story to grab youngster's attention. Other delights here include: an amusing analysis of how comics have predicted the future; a meticulous listing of "Twice-Told Superman Tales," proving how often favorite stories from the Silver Age recycled previous adventures; and the Mopee Awards given to a few "sometimes embarrassing, sometimes hilarious missteps in classic comics history."

The book ends appropriately with "Lo, There Shall Come An Ending" which explores a number of possible comics and dates for the conclusion of the Silver Age, a subject much discussed recently here in *Comic Book Marketplace*. Others may disagree and it may never be finally resolved, but Craig's nominations are *Fantastic Four* #102, Kirby's final regular issue, and *Superman* #229, the last edited by Mort Weisinger, both a month apart in August and September 1970.

This is an enormously entertaining, eminently "dip-able" book, rounded out with a five-page price guide. Also handy are the listings in the book of reprint sources for most of the recommended issues, if you can't find or afford the originals. The design inside is clear and efficient, though I feel the cover is rather clumsy and cluttered in comparison. Nevertheless, whether you are a true "Baby Boomer" like Craig, and myself for that matter (which means you were born between 1946 and 1964), or whether your childhood came earlier or later than this, Shutt's infectious enthusiasm and warm wit cannot fail to transport you back to the crazy, inventive four-color wonderment of the sparkling, brilliant Silver Age. To many fans, and to Craig for one, he believes, "Those comics will always represent the true Golden Age of Comics."

Marketplace Mail

[continued from page 6]

I read a horror comic sometime between 1974-1978, which may have been a Warren or one of the Eerie-style comics...This particular story was about a race of "beautiful" people who came to settle, as I recall, a planet...The planet was seemingly empty, only mysterious bones lying around...Then the "nasties" a race of big ugly meat-eaters, returned to their home and used the "beautifuls" as Scooby-snacks....The final page of the story, which I'll never forget for some reason, showed the trunk of a beautiful woman protruding from the jaws of one of these "Nasties"...If anyone can direct me to a comic issue, I'd be very appreciative, as this is the final comic on my long and almost completed want-list. Thanks for any help!

Bob Franks
sknarf1760@yahoo.com

Question and answer

For years Michelle Nolan has kept referring in her columns to Dan Stevenson's issue-by-issue comic book database. Will Mr. Stevenson ever consider making his database available to the general public? It would certainly be extremely helpful for scholars and collectors alike and prove a most welcome complement to Jerry Bails' *Who's Who*.

Dr. Jean-Paul Gabilliet
France

My index of comics by publisher and title, on a year-to-year basis (for example *Adventures of Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis* by DC #4-9 were published in 1953; DC published 303 comics in 1953) is a work in progress. I have sent copies of it to a number of people for their research and have sent portions of it (particular years, say 1954, or publishers, say Charlton) to others for their research. If anyone has a request and would tell me what they need the information for, I will be happy to help.

Dan Stevenson
127-D W. Glaucus Street
Leucadia, CA 92024
Dan_Stevenson@sparta.com

TALES FROM THE CRYPT FROM COMIC BOOK TO TELEVISION!
A Chip Selby Film
(www.cryptdvd.com)
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Not Rated

[A general disclaimer: I've worked for Russ Cochran, the publisher of *The Complete EC Library* and the facsimile line of EC comics as well as this magazine, for the entire time he has been located in Missouri—30 years now. I have had daily and continuous hands-on contact with the EC material the entire time. This made objective viewing of *Tales From the Crypt From Comic Book to Television!* difficult. —ER]

When Amicus adapted William C. (Bill) Gaines' 1950s EC horror comic book's stories into two 1970s feature films, surely the widest audience exposure they had had up to then, likely a majority of theatre-goers didn't notice the credits explaining their origin. The secret unique genius of EC comics stayed, in general, a secret. Only a few thousand people might share among themselves the gossip, anecdotes, scandals, the story of the greatest comics ever. Few enough for a secret handshake.

These details of EC's history have been covered before in many places, including this magazine. They won't be re-hashed in this review.

When big gun Hollywood returned to these classics in the 1990s TV series *Tales From the Crypt*, despite a first run on cable-only TV, the entire United States went a kind of EC-wild and it's never quite died down (at first, I was under the impression *Tales From the Crypt From Comic Book to Television!* would be keyed around that TV anthology show—the title waylaid me—and a quick check of blog-land did not dispel that mistake).

Good Lord! Wrong, wrong, wrong!

Although only an hour long, the EC story is placed in context from M.C. Gaines' (Bill's poppa) initial comic days to today's marketing of the TV puppet Crypt-Keeper. There is no Pow-Zap intro (or whatever the horror comic equivalent would be), no examples of contemporary but unrelated pop phenomena. Not even the (tempting, one assumes) reliance on the GhouLunatics. No time wasted, and yet no aspect unexamined.

With documentary production at what must be an all-time high, we've all seen some pretty iffy history lately, and for some tastes (mine, for example) far too many animated charts and typographic elements doing the hootchy-cootchy. *TFTC From CB to TV* comes up smelling rosy on both counts.

As for history, during the now 50 years since the end of EC comics, it has been possible to piece together their story—but that required reading tons of mostly amateur publications, and buttonholing the EC gang or EC historians and having it administered orally—er, aurally. Thanks to some recent hard copy publications we now have nearly one-stop resources. But given the constraint of the spoken word applied over a finite running time, this dvd does a fine job of leaving nothing out. This is likely due to the involvement of many of the chief EC experts working directly with the production, many of them the experts who've authored these recent books. They've not only appeared on camera as commentators, but apparently had clout in keeping the documentary on track and in-depth. The result is authoritative.

A further note on the commentators; they are all pertinent ones. No flashy celebrities with only tenuous connections to EC—all are tops in their fields. The several cinema household names either worked directly with EC material or were directly inspired by it.

Presented chronologically, as is quite correct for a history, the thread of the life of Bill Gaines himself provides the link between the years (as is also quite correct), but not in a heavy-handed way—rather in a natural one. Through candid photos of Bill himself, many of which few have seen before, you can follow him from boyhood to his last years as hedone-Buddha consulting with Joel Silver and partners. Also, fascinatingly, giving testimony to the Senate Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency—in sound newsreel film!

Which brings up a major point in a documentary's favor. Even the most talented writer, even the most lavishly illustrative book, will come up against difficulty in presenting information about a motion picture or radio show (at *CBM* we often run up against this). *TFTC From CB to TV* has the advantage here, and with economy and precision gives us a taste of things we've read about but perhaps not experienced—such as radio's *The Witch's Tale*.

When talking about what is primarily graphic material, too much visual is not enough. *TFTC From CB to TV* is in the catbird seat, as the entire EC opus has been reprinted, in color and at low prices. It's used throughout; as examples and as section headers and atmosphere. They've also taken considerable time and expense to dig up film, radio transcripts, etc., that flesh things out. The material has been discovered and referenced in the past by EC Fan-Addicts but here it can be shared with us directly.

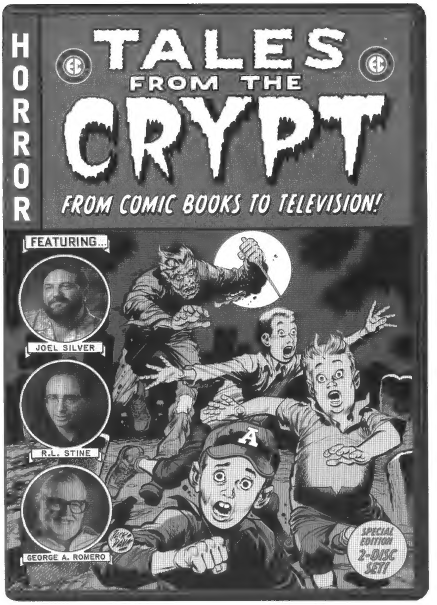
The over-use of computer image-trickery can taint a documentary, and the garishness of any comic book cries out for something splashy. But these boys, who clearly have the chops to do anything, have used restraint. With the exception of isolating one element (often a human or humanoid figure) from a panel, the diddling and photomation seems to make sense from a paneled page perspective. Too much swooping

around the screen maybe (again, that can be a matter of taste), but at least these illusions of motion are not punctuated with overdubbed "swoop" noises. The pace of the photomation seemed to follow the flow of the presentation of the history.

For this review, the dvd was viewed on a laptop with its onboard speakers—looked very sharp and clear throughout, even the archival material. It was obvious the sound track had some fillips that would be heard better on a good sound system but perhaps without the distracting surroundsound tricks that are the aural equivalent of computer graphic over-kill.

Chip Selby, whose CS Films produced this show, worked at or for David Wolper, so we could have anticipated such a class act from him even if we hadn't heard of him before. It seems to have been presented, in slightly shorter form, on the History Channel, where it would have stood out as a good solid documentary—albeit with only 15-30 seconds of screen time with *CBM*'s Russ Cochran!

Extras? Well, there are 4 hours of extras on this dvd. Although a few blogsites were bemused by their contents, anyone with an ounce of fandom in the veins are going to appreciate lengthy monologues from some surviving EC staff and artists. Their ability to explain a point without our having heard the question, and spontaneously going off on a related tangent and speaking for their deceased or absent co-workers, is remarkable. The high level of intellectual ability and the articulateness of the artists shows why Bill and Al Feldstein were able to give their brainchildren life.



Re: deceased members of the EC Gang, the dog who did not bark in the night is Harvey Kurtzman. Everyone involved went out of their way to give candid but reverential information about Kurtzman, which is mightily appreciated. As life and death are beyond the powers even of TV producers, they've done the best job possible under the circumstance.

There are also interviews with Jack Davis, Jack Kamen, Marie Severin and Al Williamson; and with Russ Cochran, Robert Overstreet and George A. Romero. A little feature with Roger Hill examines the censoring of the infamous *Crime SuspenStories* #22 cover, using the original art; a subject of Gaines' testimony for the Senate committee in 1954.

Likely the extra with the widest appeal would be a 45 minute plus dialogue between Al Feldstein and premiere sf writer Ray Bradbury. Not only did Bradbury have a unique relationship with EC and Feldstein, he is perhaps sf/fantasy fan number one. Aided by superfan Jerry Weist and a pile of EC original art, it's 45 minutes of pure pleasure.

Summing up, the appealing professionalism of the show should put the true, the balanced story of EC into general circulation for the first time. Now there is no excuse for not being a knowing member of the secret society. Now, about that handshake— ☜

[A final disclaimer. Because more than 99% of the source images are in the shape they are because of my own two hands, I found myself poring over the blowups of the comic pages and panels. It was difficult to concentrate on the story being told, in fact, while looking for personal errors. In the entire 58-60 minutes, I spotted only one, extremely minor and unimportant, graphic error made in *TFTC From CB to TV*. And the producers made it. What was it? I'll never tell! —ER]

This page from a short story included in the **Bastard Samurai** collection neatly showcases many of Oeming's influences, while it hints at the elegantly-designed and highly-refined work to come from this multi-talented creator.

Inspiration Central: Oeming

[continued from page 20]

side. Action almost always moves left to right. You don't always have to do that, because then it gets too rigid, but 90% of the time, you want that to happen. Things move left to the right. You keep the eyes about three quarters of the way up on a panel, and that will leave plenty of room for word balloons, and it also helps create an invisible horizon from which everybody kind of hangs, so the reader's eye will quickly move from one character to the next.

Interested readers should run, not walk, to their computers and go to ***www.mike-oeming.com****, where they'll learn much, much more about the past, present and planned work of Michael Avon Oeming and his compatriots. There's also more information at* ***www.insightstudios.com*** *about Mike's many projects published under that imprint.*

Naimen Report

[continued from page 70]

In the often ignored Land of Disney, there's been plenty of movement as of late—probably a pre-*Guide* frenzy before the prices ratchet up a bit. Some of the **Money Bin-emptying sales** have included:

A personally autographed, hard-cover, hand-numbered limited edition Mint copy of the Eisner Award-winning *The Life and Times of Scrooge McDuck* by Don Rosa sold for $1355 (original cost was $299). LO$ (as those in the know call it) is serialized in *Uncle Scrooge* #285-296 published by Gladstone. The 8 1/2"x11" hardbound is a limited edition of 1000 hand-numbered collector books. This was copy #183/1000 which included an original, hand-inked, colored and autographed drawing of Uncle Scrooge (young and old) by Don Rosa and an 8"x10 1/2" mini-lithograph of *Hearts of the Yukon* art poster also by Rosa, color by Susan Daigle-Leach.

Carl Barks Bronze *Sport of Tycoons* diving Uncle Scrooge with marble base #71/100 sold for $3500 Mint condition with original certificate of authenticity signed by Carl Barks and Paul Vought.

Uncle Scrooge #2 (*FC* #456) FN $228, #3 (*FC* #495) FN $255, #4 FN/VF $223, #6 FN- $148, #7 FN+ $128, #9 VF/NM $256, #10 VF- $143, #13 VF $153, #16 VF- $138, #22 VF/NM $168, #23 VF $167, #24 VF $153, #26 VF $128, #29 VF $125, #30 VF- $125, #31 VF- $113, #32 VF $113, #34 VF $113, #51 VF/NM $153, #53 VF/NM $153, #62 VF/NM $153, #67 VF/NM $123, #69 NM- $138, #70 VF/NM $118, #72-79 avg grade VF+ $50 each.

You just have to say (or sing) *Who's the leader of the club that's made for you and me?* And the chances are that anyone in earshot will be able to continue on with the *M-I-C-K-E-Y M-O-U-S-E* part of the anthem. In its first incarnation in the 1950s, then again in the '90s, it was a phenomenon that made an incredible impression on generations of kids. *The Mickey Mouse Club* premiered in 1955, just a year after the premiere of the *Disneyland* television program. A filmed show, it was seen for an hour every weekday for its first two seasons, then cut to 30 minutes per show in 1957.

When the Disney channel was inaugurated in 1983, episodes were shown daily that were aimed at an older age group, and ran from 1989 through 1994. The world was introduced to new Mouseketeer media super-stars such as (gag!-choke!-gasp!) Brittany Spears, Christina Aguilera and Justin Timberlake. Before the theme song's memorable spelling became an audio icon, before the series even aired, the *Mickey Mouse Club* was the most anticipated children's programming ever.

Now, you can own the first televised week on DVD! Walt Disney Treasure series has issued a two-disk DVD featuring these five one-hour shows shown 10/3 thru 10/7, 1955. Also showcased in this volume is a wonderful tribute to the unforgettable Jimmie Dodd, the singer-actor who hosted the show. You'll also see recently discovered, never-before-seen color archival footage of the Mousketeers' very first appearance at the grand opening celebration of Disneyland. And you'll meet six original Mouseketeers in a reunion on the soundstage where they first got together in 1955 as they share their memories of the club—Sharon Baird, Bobby Burgess, Lonnie Burr, Doreen Tracey, Cubby O'Brien, and Karen Pendleton. Annette Funicello (who has MS) was too ill to contribute to the disk.

There are countless collectibles associated with the *MMC*. Some of the few that have recently sold on eBay include: *MMC Magazine* Winter 1956 GD $91; *MMC Magazine* Summer 1956 FN $56; *MMC* "round" ears cap (2) from the late 1950s $51; *MMC* Game (MIB) produced by Whitman $49; a *MMC* phonograph that played 78 rpm records produced by Lionel $36; *MMC* Talent Award certificate (unused) $31; and a *MMC* fan card measuring 5" x 7" B&W in Mint condition $50.

Not to forget Mickey's comics: *Four Color* #16 "Mickey Mouse and the Phantom Blot" GD $599; *40 Big Pages of Mickey Mouse* GD $200; 1945 Firestone Tire Premium GD $188; *Four Color* #79 Carl Barks' only Mickey story "Riddle of the Red Hat" VG/FN $153; *Mickey Mouse Magazine* (precursor to *WDC&S*) V5 #1 VG $79, #5 GD/VG (with sub-crease) $107, #9 VG $152, #11 GD #103.

Now it's time to say goodbye to all our company. M-I-C, See you real soon ! K-E-Y, Why? Because (I) we like you! (you know the rest!)

NORTHERN LIGHTS SHINE ON NEW YORK CITY!

In a once-in-a-lifetime occurrence, the Northern Lights, usually only seen in the far northern latitudes, will be visible in New York City on May 18 & 19 at the New Yorker Hotel, conveniently located at 34th Street and 8th Avenue.

The second part of the incredible **Northern Lights Collection,** in which the owner has invested more than **$1,000,000,** features long runs of such popular titles as **ADVENTURE, MORE FUN,** and **NEW COMICS,** with many copies hailing from important pedigree collections. If you're a fan of **Golden Age** comics, this is an auction you don't dare miss! The best part is, ***your*** comics, original art, and vintage memorabilia can be sold right alongside this amazing collection!

Heritage's annual New York City **auction** is always one of our most exciting, and one that you will certainly want to be a part of! The **deadline** for consigning to this landmark sale is **April 5**, so call or write **Ed Jaster** (EdJ@HeritageComics.com) at 214-252-4288 or **Lon Allen** (LonA@HeritageComics.com) at 214-252-4261, or **Grey Smith** (GreySM@HeritageComics.com) for movie material at 214-668-6928 today. Remember, the **earliest** consignments get the most publicity, so make that call **NOW!**

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